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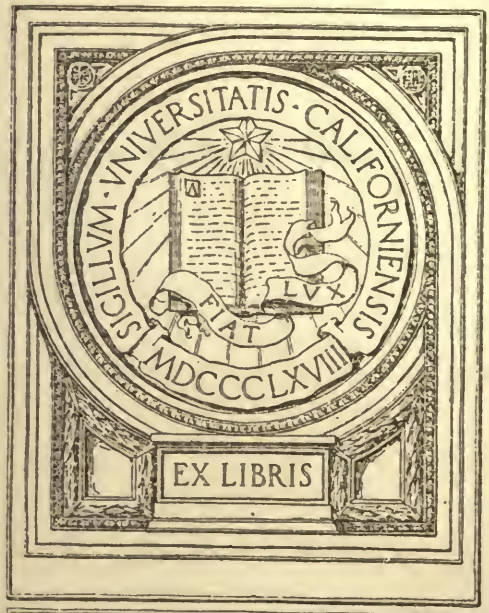


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PRIZE ESSAY.

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# CHRISTIANITY AND INFIDELITY:

## AN EXPOSITION

OF

## THE ARGUMENTS ON BOTH SIDES.

ARRANGED ACCORDING TO A PLAN PROPOSED BY GEORGE BAILLIE, ESQ.

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*The occasion of the present Work was the following Advertisement, which appeared in the "Glasgow Reformers' Gazette" of the 6th of May,* 1854, *and in other Journals, English and Scotch :—*

## THIRD PRIZE ESSAY.

### INFIDELITY AGAINST CHRISTIANITY, AND CHRISTIANITY AGAINST INFIDELITY.

THE PREMIUM for the LAYMAN'S best ESSAY against INFIDELITY, now in the London Press for publication, having been paid to Mr. David M'Burnie, 33, Hanover-Square, Bradford, Yorkshire, after a talented and interesting competition, and an *un*promised Premium having also been paid for the Second Best Essay, to Mr. James Clark, 45, Taylor-Street, Glasgow, JUSTICE now dictates that an equal opportunity be afforded for the discussion of *both* sides of the subject; and as it seems desirable to obtain an *able* EXPOSITION of that nature from *any* quarter, the Subscriber will pay TWENTY SOVEREIGNS for what he shall deem the most *logical* and *complete* yet *condensed* EPITOME of all *relevant* facts, arguments, and objections urgeable: —I. By INFIDELITY against CHRISTIANITY, with ANSWERS *strictly relevant* thereto. And, II. By CHRISTIANITY against INFIDELITY, with ANSWERS *strictly relevant* thereto. But, FIRST, Each Competitor will prefix to his EXPOSITION, as his *accepted* rule therein, a copy of this Advertisement, and its Explanatory Notes. SECOND, Each Competitor must frame his EXPOSITION with a *rigorous* regard to *relevancy*, *brevity*, *perspicuity*, and *good temper*, in the form of *separate* PROPOSITIONS or OBJECTIONS, on the *left*-hand pages of large folio paper, marking each objection with a running number, and of ANSWERS *strictly relevant* thereto, on the *opposite* or *right*-hand pages, each marked with a *corresponding* number, in order that every PROPOSITION or OBJECTION, with its ANSWER, may CONFRONT each other, and be thereby promptly *appreciable*. But, if any intending Competitor wishes more information hereon, his Epistle thereanent to the Subscriber, shall be duly attended to, and a copy of the said explanatory Notes will be sent him *gratis*. Third, Each Competitor must, if possible, bring to the Work a *zeal* and *research wholly unprejudiced*, so as to present in a *clear* and *impartial* light the QUINTESSENCE of all *important* matter, which has been or *might* have been *relevantly* adduced by the *ablest* writers on *both* sides of the controversy; and specifying, in foot Notes, the Title, Volume, Page, and Edition of each authority founded on. FOURTH, To obviate all undue reserve or restraint, and thereby to promote a *frank* and *vigorous* EXPOSITION, Competitors may, if inclined, state in a prefatory Note, that their Objections and Answers are to be viewed not as expressing wholly their *own* convictions, but rather as an Epitome of all that can *best* be urged on *both* sides of the discussion.

Fiske 1928

LASTLY, Each Competitor will annex his subscription and address to his EXPOSITION, which must be lodged on or before the first day of January next, with the Subscriber, who shall, within four months thereafter, notify to the successful Competitor, his readiness to pay him the said PREMIUM. And for the farther encouragement of Competitors, the Subscriber, if requested, shall, as heretofore, surrender, upon the *most liberal* terms, his hereby reserved copyright to the Prize Essay; and the *other* Essays shall be restored to the respective Essayists, if applied for, forthwith.

GEORGE BAILLIE.

37, Dalhousie-Street, Garnethill, Glasgow,
6th May, 1854.

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## NOTES EXPLANATORY OF THE ABOVE ADVERTISEMENT.

The adage "where there is a *will* there is a *way*" is so true, that were the Advertiser not now old and infirm, he would himself work out the proposed Exposition, with a pleasurable perseverance. The whole *modus operandi* is present to his mind, and, for the aid and satisfaction of Competitors, he will here state it frankly:—1st, No pains would be spared in collecting *at least* half-a-dozen of the *most powerful* works, foreign or otherwise, on *each* side of the discussion.—2d, With pencil in hand, he would carefully peruse the *whole* Infidel works *(and none else at this stage,)* marking every *notable* clause with an "O,' or an "A.," as it seemed fittest for an *Objection* or an *Answer*.—3d, The same operation would fall to be performed as to the *Christian* works, and thus all that would remain to be done would be, FIRST, to extract from the *Infidel* works all clauses marked "O," and reduce them into the *fewest possible* words, in the shape of distinct *Objections* or *Propositions*. SECOND, To extract from the *Christian* works all clauses marked "A," and reduce them into the *fewest possible* words, in the shape of *Answers* to the said *Objections;* and, THIRD, to repeat these *two last* operations, in the framing of *Objections* by *Christianity* against *Infidelity*, and of *Answers* thereto by *Infidelity*. Of course, whenever, on *either* side, an Objection was found to be *wholly* or *partially* unanswered—or an *Answer* or *Objection* less *relevant* or *vigorous* than it *might fairly* be made, the Essayist should feel it his *right* and *duty* to supply these *omissions* and amend these *defects* to the best of his *ability*, but always with strict regard to relevancy and brevity—so that the whole EXPOSITION might thus, with *comparative ease*, be rendered *clear*, *consecutive*, and *condensed*.

The advantages of this mode of procedure are many. 1st, No *relevantly important* matter would be omitted. 2d, The mind of the Essayist would be spared the incessant *conflict* and *perplexity* incident to any attempt to *answer* each *Objection, unico contextu*, with the *framing of the Objection itself*. 3d, Such an attempt would have the *baneful* effect of tempting the Essayist to *mould the Objection so as to suit its coming Answer*, instead of framing the Objection itself in its most *invulnerable* form, as is done by every skilful Debater. 4th, Any *unfair* tinkering of materials would be easily detected by one conversant with *both* sides of the discussion, as he *should* be, who undertakes to Adjudicate in the case. Lastly, By the said *sequence* of study on *one* side, *before taking up the other side*, the whole discussion would become more *homogeneous*, *coherent*, and *convincing*, than it could otherwise be. Moreover, the terms of the Advertisement necessarily require

each Competitor to "bring to the work, if possible, a *zeal* and *research wholly unprejudiced*;" and, indeed, any undue partiality on *either* side, would soon betray itself, by the very *juxtaposition* of *each* Objection and *its* Answer—wherein consists the main excellence of the proposed Exposition.

Here it may be proper to remark, as to the importance of *brevity*, that now-a-days, most men have so many pressing demands upon their time and attention, that a Big Book is a Big Bore in common parlance. Brevity once called the soul of wit, is now the soul of most mental productions. The *multum in parvo* alone pleases, especially in theological effusions, which otherwise are looked upon by many as mere lumber. And these considerations are here adduced, because the Advertiser knows how much *easier* it is to be *diffuse* than *dense* in style. We are told of a Lady, who excused herself to her Correspondent, for sending a *long* Epistle, as *she had not time to write a short one.* Men must now make Books as Bakers make Currant Bun in Scotland—*cram much fruit into small space.* A French Cook is said to have concentrated the essence of a whole Ox into a single cup of soup, and however that may be, we all know that in dexterous hands, the literary pruning-knife can perform wonders. For instance, "The Statistical Account of Scotland" in 21 volumes, was compressed into *One Volume*, by Sir John Sinclair, Bart., and critics pronounced it "an accurate and valuable Epitome," as was *proved* by its *instantaneous popularity* among all classes.

The prefixed Advertisement may create some slight sensation, and at all events it is hoped it will induce not a few Christians and Infidels to stand forth and give battle to their *most formidable* antagonists in Theology, foreign and domestic. If well followed up it must conduce to bring our *Grand Religious Controversy* to a fair *stand-up, face-to-face, foot-to-foot* EXPOSITION, well suited to the *un*educated *mind*—spare *time* and *sparer* purse of the humble artizan—especially if published in a brief, cheap, and popular shape. At all events, the SCHEME, whatever be its merits or demerits, originates with the Advertiser, and is believed to be quite new. He humbly thinks that if it be executed with *thorough talent—stern impartiality*, and *rigorous research*, it must become both *popular* and *profitable*—because it cannot fail to be a useful publication to the masses—who have neither *time* to *peruse*—nor *money* to *purchase*—nor *capacity* to *comprehend*, the pondrous, expensive, and multifarious lucubrations over which the Controversy is at present scattered. Hence they have generally hitherto taken their Creeds, like their Clothes, upon credit, without being able to give a right reason for their Belief or Unbelief. But now this Blind-Buff Game is unfit for a Class no longer in nonage.

To save Competitors unnecessary trouble, the Advertiser will dispense with much debate as to God's *existence*. *What* God is—not *that* God is,—seems almost all that is necessary to consider here, on that branch of the discussion—because, it would imply insanity to *affirm* God's *non-existence in every sense of the word "God."* Pantheism, Materialism, and Spinosaism, are called, or rather *mis*called Atheistical, though they recognise *in* God the "*All*-in-*All*," and are therefore *Theistical* in the most extensive sense. These Doctrines, however, involve the inquiry, "*What* God is?" and of course they must take their *fair* share in the Exposition. Some years ago, the Advertiser endeavoured to refute Materialism, syllogistically, and Mr. Holyoake in his "Reasoner, No. 118, 30th August, 1848," endeavoured to answer the Essay; but it is believed that the Public, generally,

thought his Answer inefficient, and therefore, a Reply thereto, though written, was not published. The subject is, however, so *mysterious*, that it is difficult to treat it *satisfactorily ;* and, as it is known, that Materialism is *au fond*, the Faith of many educated persons both at home and abroad, it will, perhaps, take some *small* share in the ensuing Exposition, although not a few deem it—apart from Scripture—a subject almost *wholly* beyond human logic, because, *none but a God can* ADEQUATELY *comprehend a God.*

How strange and sorrowful it is, therefore, that our controversies, on a theme the most profound and sublime that Man can enter upon, have almost always been hitherto conducted in a way quite irrational, intemperate, and sectarian, or *one-sided.* Out comes a partizan who vamps up volumes of panegyric on his own pet convictions, and of contumely on all who dare to doubt his spiritual nostrums. The latter, thus exasperated, shower upon their assailant in turn, an equal profusion of personal invective and idle declamation. All the while, neither party controvert *explicitly* the facts, arguments, and objections of their opponents ; and thus the theological conflict becomes more and more unsatisfactory and repulsive to all considerate men. It is, therefore, high time now, that the *Examination* and *Exposition* of true Religion be rescued from treatment so disreputable and unconvincing.

Fortunately, Courts of Judicature exhibit modes of investigation and decision, obviously as adequate to the solution of our Theological problem as they have ever been, in past ages, to the solution of questions the most momentous to Man's Life, Fortune, and Character here below.—Our Tribunals of Justice very properly oblige parties to *controvert explicitly*, and in their *order*, *each* and *every* fact, argument, and objection, urged by their opponents, under pain of being held as confessing the *truth* of whatever they do not *specially deny.* It is with a view to that judicious mode of judicial expiscation, that the *prefixed* Advertisement is framed; and, if its Rules be but *vigorously* and *honestly* worked out, it seems likely to tend more than any course hitherto adopted, to strip the *Religious Question* of those interminable irrelevancies, evasions, and rhetorical ramblings, under which it has hitherto been hidden by a heartless and crafty casuistry. Thus, *pure* and *undefiled* Religion will be tested, and recognised by practical principles which our most eminent Jurists and Judges daily enforce and acknowledge as the best *Explorers* of Justice and Truth—*that* truth which fears nothing—scorns evasion —repudiates artifice, and courts the closest scrutiny—because, like Gold, its purity will *prove* itself the purer the more *severely* it is tested.

Finally,—This ardent effort to unveil truth, and unmask untruth, by placing them *vis-à-vis*, seems to have the high sanction of England's mightiest Minstrel, who thus quaintly expresses himself :—

> "In logic, contraries *laid together* more evidently appear : it follows, then, that all controversy being permitted, *falsehood* will appear *more* false, and *truth more* true ; which must needs conduce to the *confirmation* of an *implicit* truth."—MILTON.

G. B.

# PREFACE.

Throughout the following Epitome, the principle has been to adhere strictly to the idea of Revelation as a *miraculous dispensation:* i.e., a special interference, on the part of a personal Deity, with the general order of things, usually described as being subject to the Laws of Nature. Hence no notice is taken of those explanations of Christianity,—forming, perhaps, the most generally attractive portion of the religious literature of the day,—which, while retaining the terms of supranaturalism, explain it away into a simple accordance with natural reason and science; either plainly so discoverable to this cultivated age, or to be inferred as probably such in the plan of Omniscience, though at present concealed from our limited faculties: thus reducing Christianity in fact to the level of common events, and leaving no real ground of contention between the mere natural philosopher, as such, and the believer in Revelation.

This principle has been the guide in the selection of the following course of Argument; which, accordingly, represents, not a history of the controversy, but such a view of it as, in the judgment of the Compiler, gives a fair and consistent statement of the general question, without entering upon minor sectarian differences. The extracts selected are thus merely such as seemed the best procurable to set forth the point in hand, without regard being had to the great discrepancies of opinion amongst the various Authors; some of whom are, consequently, not at all fairly represented as to their general opinions by these partial quotations. For their bearing upon the argument the Compiler is responsible; but the real meaning of the Author, as far as each passage is concerned, has, nevertheless, been always endeavoured to be preserved. In many cases the language has been freely condensed, but it has never been altered; not a single word of any different shade of meaning, has been substituted within a quotation; and in

passages where the style was expressive of feeling, and in some measure itself an argument, every word has been scrupulously retained.

In the attempt to fill up the scheme,—imperfect as it is,—the Compiler confesses to have been frustrated by the total inability to find Answers fairly corresponding to many of the Objections—so much easier of statement. This has been felt especially under the head of the Internal Evidence of Christianity, where the so-called Answers are accordingly offered with reluctance, as, for the most part, neither meeting the question, nor affording parallel trains of thought.

It is, indeed, in the light of parallel representations that this Compilation is wished to be regarded; not at all as actuated by the spirit of controversy, but as a simple juxta-position of both sides of the question that may help towards a fair balance. Thus considered, it is hoped that the positive form of laying down opinions on subjects so important, will not be attributed to dogmatism or presumption. The cases are only pleaded; preparatory to the judgment that is yet in abeyance, and has to be pronounced by the reader. Or rather, it is desired merely to furnish, in brief, suggestive specimens of a line of argument,—which, ranging over so vast and various a field, can be but the slightest sketch,—to be filled up and altered in the reader's own mind. Its deficiencies may thus have the truly best effect, of stimulating him to work out a more satisfactory train of reasoning for himself.

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*Note to the Reader.* It is recommended to read first the Objections of an entire Section consecutively, and then refer to them separately in connection with the Answers.

# INFIDELITY AGAINST CHRISTIANITY,

AND

# CHRISTIANITY AGAINST INFIDELITY.

PART I.

# INFIDELITY AGAINST CHRISTIANITY.

## OBJECTIONS, ON THE PART OF INFIDELITY,

AGAINST REVELA-

THAT IT IS DEROGATORY

I.

The idea of the God of Revelation, incongruous with that of the Author of Nature.

THE idea of Revelation necessarily presupposes a Deity, an intelligent Being, who has certain designs with regard to man. This Being also cannot be thought of separately from the Author of Nature. But all the operations of Nature are more and more discovered to be in a regular series of sequences, which seem best described as *fixed laws;* whereas Revelation supposes an exceptional interference in human affairs on the part of God: and hence, at the outset, springs an inherent incongruity in the idea we can form of God, and his mode of working.

II.

It makes him not all-wise, or not omnipotent.

The study of Nature also more and more makes us associate the idea of wisdom and power with uniformity of plan, producing effects infinitely varied in kind and degree by one and the same mode of operation; which is in contradiction with the notion that Divine personal intervention was necessary for man, though not required for the lower animals, with whom he is in close relationship as regards his physical constitution.

But if we set aside this extreme view, and admit the opinion hitherto almost universally adopted, that God willed man to be of an essentially different nature from other creatures, still the need of a Revelation for him seems to imply some inefficiency in the act of his creation. If we suppose that man was endowed with an independent, godlike power of his own, in the place of those instinctive impulses which serve for the guidance of inferior animals, and that being thus capable of resisting God, he did actually rebel against him, so that a Revelation became necessary to restore him: then it follows that God either did not foresee, or was not willing, or not able to prevent man's rebellion. It may be said that the purpose of God to make man a free agent—a benevolent purpose, because productive of the greatest amount of good on the whole,—involved the necessity for this rebellion, sin and misery: but it must be acknowledged that then God cannot carry on his designs as he would, but is thwarted by man; and Revelation becomes a mere compulsory expedient to meet the exigencies of the case.

# PART I.

# INFIDELITY AGAINST CHRISTIANITY.

## ANSWERS, ON THE PART OF CHRISTIANITY.

TION IN GENERAL:

TO THE IDEA OF GOD.

I. OUR faculties are too limited to judge respecting the Divine Being. What seems inconsistency to our narrow comprehension, would doubtless resolve itself into perfect harmony if we knew the whole—if we could see as God sees. What appear to us respectively as fixed law and personal intervention of God, may in reality have no such distinction in their nature; since the seeming mechanical course of nature must yet be under the constant sway of His arbitrary Will, and can be fixed only in so far as His pleasure remains fixed.

"If we leave out the consideration of Religion, we are in such total darkness, upon what causes, occasions, reasons, or circumstances, the present course of nature depends; that there does not appear any improbability for or against supposing, that 5 or 6,000 years may have given scope for causes... from whence miraculous interpositions may have arisen... But, take in the consideration of Religion, or the moral system of the world, and then we see distinct particular reasons for miracles: to afford mankind instruction additional to that of nature, and to attest the truth of it. And this gives a real credibility to the supposition, that it might be part of the original plan of things, that there should be miraculous interpositions."*

II. All the rest of creation belong to earth, and are doomed to perish; man alone is made in the image of God, and destined for immortality: it is therefore natural that, while other beings are left to the mechanical agency of laws once set in action and then abandoned to work out their given ends, for man there should be reserved a more immediate communication with his Maker.†

Every created being is necessarily imperfect and liable to go astray.

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* Butler's *Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the constitution and course of Nature.* Part ii., ch. ii. § iii. Ed: 1839, p. 186.

† "If the Supreme Being proposed only such ends as mechanism can produce, then he might have framed a machinery so perfect and sure as to need no suspension of its ordinary movements. But he has an incomparably nobler end. His great purpose is to educate, to rescue from evil, to carry forward for ever the free, rational mind or soul... the chief distinction of intelligent beings is Moral Freedom. This capacity, at once the most glorious and the most fearful which we can conceive, shows how the human race may have come into a condition to which the illumination of nature was inadequate."—*Channing's Works,* in one volume: 1840. p. 416.

III. Partial in his benevolence.

If it was the benevolence of God which induced him to give the revelation that was indispensable for the salvation of man: yet this benevolence is not such as would seem to befit the Father of all his creatures, when it is limited to a favoured few, as every Revelation must be in the first instance. That all mankind should be so framed as not to be able of themselves to accomplish their own well-being, and yet that the Divine aid of Revelation should be reserved only for a portion of them, seems irreconcilable with the moral attributes of Deity.

IV. Revelation bears marks of instability and caprice.

Revelation thus comes as an after-thought, to supply some original deficiency in creation; as if some unforeseen difficulty had occurred which must be met by extraordinary provision. It breaks in upon the grand simplicity of the organization of Nature, and seems to withdraw man from the dominion of everlasting and certain order which regulates the motions of the spheres, to a realm of caprice and instability. In the investigation of the Universe, here first reason finds itself in the presence of an arbitrary Being, whose proceedings not merely transcend but contradict its own best apprehensions.

This liability indeed implies some power antagonistic to good, *i.e.* to God, whether it be in the nature of matter, or in some spiritual principle of evil: and herein lies the dark mystery of the Origin of Evil, the "great and perplexing question" for which no solution has yet been found.* Lord Brougham says: "The whole argument respecting evil must, from the nature of the question, resolve itself into either a proof of some absolute or mathematical necessity not to be removed by infinite power, or the showing that some such proof may be possible, although we have not yet discovered it."†

That God should give a Revelation because the stubbornness of man's nature made his salvation otherwise impossible, is all the more a proof of the greatness of the Divine love towards him.

III. "Why it was that the Most High thought fit to make a revelation to one people, and not at once to all the world, we cannot explain, and we must not presume to decide: . . . nor yet why many nations, in various parts of the world, have been left, even to this day, in the darkness of idolatrous superstition; or, indeed, why any such thing as evil should exist at all. All this, we may conclude, would have been explained to us in Scripture, if it had been necessary for us to understand it. As it is, any attempt to explain these things is fruitless and presumptuous."‡

IV. Though *reason* may satisfy itself with finding mere Power and Intelligence, an emotionless Lawgiver, in the Governor of the Universe, yet the *heart* will acknowledge its need of a Being capable of Love, which makes election, and is not bound by Law. A voice from the inner depths of man's nature will make itself heard, telling that a God, good and loving, cannot hold himself aloof from immediate personal communication with his creatures. A God apart from men, ruling only by fixed laws, is like the chilling Fate of heathen mythology, and not the God that the religious heart seeks after and feels with innate conviction to be the true object of its worship.

"To the sceptic, no principle is so important as the uniformity of nature, the constancy of its laws. To me, there is a vastly higher truth, to which miracles bear witness, and to which I welcome their aid. What I wish chiefly to know is, that Mind is the supreme power in the universe; that matter is its instrument and slave; that there is a Will to which nature can offer no obstruction; that God is unshackled by the laws of the universe, and controls them at his pleasure. This absolute sovereignty of the Divine Mind over the universe, is the only foundation of hope for the triumph of the human mind over matter, over physical influences, over imperfection and death."$

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* See Archbishop Whately's *Essays on some of the peculiarities of the Christian Religion*. 5th Ed., 1846, pp. 68, 69.

† *Dissertations in Illustration of Paley's Natural Theology*. 1839. Vol. ii., p. 78.

‡ *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 8th Ed. Whately's *Third Preliminary Dissertation*, p. 468. See Butler's *Analogy*. Part ii., ch. vi.

$ Channing's Works, p. 415. *Evidences of Christianity*. Part ii.

AGAINST REVELA-

THAT IT CANNOT BE INFERRED, A PRIORI, FROM OUR EX-

V. Turning from consideration of the view of the Divine character as affected by Revelation, to observation of human nature, we find here also inherent objection against it. As it did not seem fitting for Deity to grant, so neither does it seem fitting for man to receive.

**Man learns best by experience.**

We see that in all matters of worldly concern the best knowledge he has is that gained by experience; that what he has found out for himself is of more value than all that is taught to him: and there is no natural reason why the attainment of religion should follow a different rule. On the contrary, it would seem especially that religion is a kind of learning that must grow out of the mind, and cannot be put into it; as we find that the higher is the knowledge we seek, the more it requires, even if not actually originated, but suggested by another, yet to be adopted and assimilated by spontaneous effort. A mere statement of facts, outwardly impressed upon a man, is nothing to him till his nature is internally stirred so as to be vitally acted upon by it, and all the powers of his mind have had their share in the examination and reception of it; and much more in what relates to morality, the learning of verbal precepts is nothing without the accompanying emotion of the heart and conscience. And *the greater the authority* with which outward instruction either of the heart or mind is given, the *less* is the internal and only real vital action regarding it. So that, most of all, instruction direct from God, would have the effect of stopping the action of our own minds, and would therefore be least really beneficial to us.

VI.

**He should be supposed capable of learning all that is necessary for him.**

Paley and most defenders of Revelation, begin by assuming that it is good for man. But setting aside all theological prepossessions, the presumption is that the knowledge man is fitted to attain is all that is necessary for him. It is always some notion of the fallen state of man, and the Devil having spoilt the original work of God, that makes him supposed unable to do without it. On the simple ground of reason and experience it is to be inferred that the exertion of the powers with which he is furnished is sufficient to accomplish the end of his being. The prime doctrines that Revelation must be supposed to teach are, that there is a God, and a future life of retribution. But if these cannot be discovered by the natural faculties, the presumption is that they are not necessary to be known, or not until the faculties are so grown as to be able to discover them. And in fact the same faculties in kind though not in degree, are required to comprehend as to discover; so that, unless they already exist in the mind, waiting for growth and development, revelation is a nullity to it. We can see how much

TION IN GENERAL:

PERIENCE OF HUMAN NATURE, TO BE GOOD FOR MAN.

V. Certainly learning by experience is the most effectual method in all worldly matters; and it engenders that independence of spirit and manly energy, which fit him to contend with the difficulties of life, and the rivalship and opposing interests of his fellow-men. It makes a man feel his own strength. But this very tendency shows that it is not adapted to religion, which requires a quite opposite frame of mind. A lowly submission, a humble waiting for the Divine teaching, is the proper condition of the soul when it looks towards God.

"For what end has God ordained, as the chief means of human improvement, the communication of light from superior to inferior minds? It is rational to believe, that the Creator designs to bind his creatures to Himself as truly as to one another, and to awaken towards himself even stronger gratitude, confidence, and love; for these sentiments towards God are more happy and ennobling than towards any other being; and it is plain that revelation, or immediate divine teaching, serves as effectually to establish these ties between God and man, as human teaching to attach men to one another. We see, then, in revelation an end corresponding to what the Supreme Being adopts in his common providence.... There is plainly an expression of deeper concern, a more affectionate character, in this mode of instruction, than in teaching us by the fixed order of nature. Revelation is God speaking to us in our own language, in the accents which human friendship employs. It shows a love, breaking through the reserve and distance, which we all feel to belong to the method of teaching us by his works alone.... Instruction in regard to Futurity is the great means of improvement. That God should give us light as to a Future state, if he design it for us, is what we should expect from his solicitude. Nature thirsts for, and analogy almost promises, some illumination on the subject of human destiny.... There are in the human soul wants, deep wants, which are not met by the influences and teachings, which the ordinary course of things affords.... in proportion as these convictions and wants become distinct, they break out in desires of illumination and aids from God not found in nature."*

"Within the circle of our own being, our search after that meet provision for the nourishment of man's religious powers and sensibilities which the general laws of the Divine economy warrant us in expecting, cannot terminate satisfactorily. To the intellect God has revealed himself through the medium of Nature.... But those works of his in the physical universe do not satisfy *all* the deep yearnings of our nature. Our moral constitution craves a *moral* manifestation of Deity,—to know him in his relation to conscience. And this want of ours is his handwriting on our nature, to the effect that such a revelation of himself may be looked for, and will be vouchsafed."†

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* Channing's *Evidences of Christianity*. Part I. pp. 401, 402.

† *Bases of Belief*. By Edward Miall. 1853. pp. 97, 160.

more healthful an exercise it is for the mind to ponder upon these subjects and work out its own results, and how much more genuine will be the faith which it thus attains, than if the doctrines were given as imperative *dicta* that admitted of nothing but a purely passive acceptation.

VII. The tendency of Revelation is to check human improvement.

Revealed truth requires a child-like mind for its reception, and the effect of Revelation is to keep mankind in the condition of childhood: preventing them from ever learning for themselves those things which most of all concern them, and making them always contented with a mere external knowledge, or rather a flattering pretence of knowledge. All miraculous action is *external.*

It would appear, therefore, *à priori*, that Revelation must have a tendency to hinder the progress of human improvement:

By checking the exercise of man's own faculties upon the most important points;

By making him believe that he really knows what he merely echoes because it is told him;

By making him think that what his own faculties acquire for him, is something inferior, and to be despised;

And therefore by placing him in a false, unnatural state of mind, between the conflicting claims of what he is made to consider Divine, and what is merely human knowledge.

AGAINST REVELA-

ON ACCOUNT OF THE DIF-

VIII. Miracles are necessary as evidence, but their value changes with the state of science.

Revelation, which is essentially miraculous in its nature, must attest itself by miracle. If God holds a supernatural communication with men, his direct presence must manifest itself by supernatural tokens. It would be strange and unaccountable if such were wanting. Accordingly we find that every religion has rested its claim upon signs and wonders; and the ruder the age, the more grossly physical have been the marvels by which it has been accompanied. Moses received the Law on tables of stone direct from heaven, inscribed by the finger of God himself; as the image of Pallas, which was the symbol of salvation to Greece, came down from Jupiter; and the very voice of God was heard at the baptism of Jesus, announcing his beloved Son. —But the weight which is attached to physical miracles changes with the state of science. Those marvels which were easily believed in times of ignorance, can be received upon no amount of evidence in an enlightened age; and on the other hand, what seemed stupendous wonders then, are now seen to be mere natural events. In barbarous times a gunpowder explosion would seem better proof of the presence of Deity, than that the sun should stand still. Miracles which awe one generation, are imitated by jugglers in another. Their value as evidence is fluctuating, and would base the faith of mankind upon a sliding scale.

RAL.—NOT GOOD FOR MAN.]

VI. The generality of Christian writers maintain that man is unable by his own unaided powers to attain to the knowledge of God and of a future life;* but all agree that these doctrines are essential elements of the education of the human race. Without a belief in these, man belongs only to this lower world. He wants those spiritual and elevating tendencies which only can raise him above temporal and material things; and to kindle these God has reserved to the immediate working of His own Spirit. By nature, man is fitted for earth; here he is endowed with sufficient faculties to serve him, and he is under the injunction to use and to improve them: but to learn of heavenly things he must have a heavenly instructor.

By the natural man the infinite importance of belief in these and concomitant doctrines is not comprehended. He only considers their temporal effects, and summarily concludes that man can do very well without them, or wait for ages while generation after generation passes away till perchance they may be discovered! It is well for man, that the mercies of God are more speedy to help, than his creatures to feel their need!

VII. To remain in a child-like frame towards the Heavenly Father, is the best possible condition for the spirit of man. No intellectual attainments, or growth of enlightenment, or even moral strength, can make up for the want of that temper most becoming to mortal men, a religious docility.

TION IN GENERAL:

FICULTY OF ATTESTING IT.

VIII. This is generally assented to. Paley says: "Now in what way can a revelation be made, but by miracles? In none which we can conceive."† The advocates of Christianity undertake to prove that the miracles recorded as such in the New Testament, were really "out of the ordinary course of nature, beyond the unassisted power of man."‡ It is true that some wonderful actions, which seemed miraculous at the time, may be afterwards discovered to be capable of performance in a natural manner in an advanced age of science; but it still has claim to be considered a miracle, that the original actor, who did them in ignorance of science, should have forestalled the discovery of after times, and performed those wonders, not by happy accident, but with full assurance and deliberate, expressed intention, and in repeated instances; and that this power should be possessed not by one person only, but conveyed by him to many others.

And the effect of such wonderful works, which are not properly part of the Revelation itself, but accompanying incidents, is to draw attention

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* See Part II.

† *Evidences of Christianity.* Preparatory Considerations. See Whately's *Preliminary Dissertation,* in En. Britt., p. 499.

‡ Whately's *Introductory Lessons on Christian Evidences,* Ed. 12, p. 31.

IX. Moral evidence is insufficient.

As men advance by the cultivation of science in their acquaintance with nature, and discover how harmonious and beneficent is the regularity of her working, physical miracles fall more and more into discredit; and it becomes the ordinary course to attribute the miracles to the department of mind, which is not yet seen to be also subject to fixed laws. The miraculous attestation to revelation is now supposed to consist in (1st) the proclaiming of moral truths, either not discoverable by human faculties, or beyond the present attainments of man: which, therefore, it must be objected, would be inappreciable by him, or premature to his condition, and consequently harmful rather than beneficial; and which would also, for that reason, seem to him untrue, and be necessarily unavailing to convince him of their divine origin. The efficiency of moral truth as a test of revelation depends upon the moral condition in which it is received, and is uncertain and fluctuating accordingly.

X. Spiritual evidence cannot be imparted.

Or (2d) the spiritual attestation may consist in a sudden and vivid religious impression, for which no natural cause is perceived; which produces an instantaneous and apparently irresistible conviction, and sometimes throws the whole mind into a new state. The converted soul has found that which meets its secret, hitherto unsatisfied want, and it can only feel that it must be supplied immediately from the Father of spirits. But this internal conviction is one that can be only *felt*, not reasoned on: a man can never *prove* to himself, much less to others, that it does not proceed from an idiosyncracy of his own nature, or from an over-weening confidence in his own impressions. If this strong self-confidence is a test of Divine revelation, it is one that is always liable to be taken for self-delusion.

AGAINST REVELA-

ON ACCOUNT OF THE DIFFI-

XI. Supposing that a Revelation has been proclaimed by the lips of men attesting their divine authority in a manner satisfactory to their present hearers: yet the difficulty of recording it for the benefit of distant times and places, presents objections that appear insuperable.

The memory of sacred events may be presented either by oral tradition, or in writing.

Record by tradition is vague and perishing;

The first method is so loose and vague that nothing but the most simple facts can be supposed to be faithfully handed down by it; and even these become quite

DIFFICULTY OF ATTESTING IT.]

to it in a striking manner. It may be represented thus: that the great miracle of Divine interference, of His peculiar Presence amongst men, exalts all their faculties, suddenly heightens them to an amazing degree, so that, as it were by involuntary, uncontrollable flashes, they are raised beyond themselves and beyond their age, and perform deeds which, though not properly miraculous, are the effect of miracle, and the immediate mode of manifesting it.

IX. The proclaiming of moral truths is rather a corroboration than a direct proof of a Divine Revelation. If the promulgators of it are not only teachers of the strictest virtue, but are themselves patterns of the practice of it, certainly these are credentials to be expected in the messengers of heaven, and inconsistent with the character of impostors. That men of extraordinary virtue should be the victims of self-delusion is not impossible, but in the highest degree improbable.

To show a degree of moral insight more pure and enlightened than belongs to the age and nation, cannot be strictly taken as evidence of supernatural endowment; but it affords a powerful inducement to believe in it.

X. The conversion of the soul can be effected by the grace of God alone, and this is the true and proper evidence of Divine Revelation. Assent to outward facts is nothing; the subjugation of the understanding by miraculous portents is in itself of no avail, but a mere preparation for that vital belief which the Spirit of God only can inspire, and which once effected, all inferior proof is no longer needed. True, this blessed faith cannot be communicated: but the spectacle of the fruits of regeneration is the strongest testimony that can be afforded to the power of the living Word. And when this regeneration takes place not in one man, but in thousands, when whole bodies of men are moved simultaneously by the same holy influence, it is no longer possible to be referred to individual idiosyncracy, but must be recognised as the mighty working of God.

TION IN GENERAL:

CULTY OF RECORDING IT.

XI. "If any should say, 'How great an advantage the people who lived in those days, and saw miracles performed before their eyes, must have had over us, who only read of them in ancient books; and how can men in these days be expected to believe as firmly as they did?'—you may answer, that different men's trials and advantages are pretty nearly balanced. The people who lived in those times were not (any more than ourselves) forced into belief whether they would or no; but were left to exercise candour in judging fairly from the evidence before them. Those of them who were resolved to yield to their prejudices against

unreliable as soon as the lapse of time has brought us out of reach of the original circumstances in which they sprung. Thus, respecting the early legend that Hercules destroyed monsters in Greece, we can only form conjecture as to whether it was a pure myth, or whether it had its rise in any historic fact.

by writing, is exposed to human errors.

And if the account be preserved in writing, it is exposed to human error at every step:—to a want of intellectual comprehension, or moral integrity, or literary capacity, in the sacred penman; to involuntary mistake, as well as intentional fraud, in them, or in any one of their transcribers, or translators; to inherent impossibility of rendering perfectly one language into another, owing to defects in the power of words; and finally, to a want of understanding on the part of the reader. Unless we suppose God to superintend every circumstance relating to it, extending in minute ramifications farther than we can calculate or conceive, the divinity of the record is liable to be lost in an accumulation of inextricable human error.

AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN REVELA-

THAT ITS DIVINE CHARACTER IS NOT

To come now from the general to the special question of the Christian Revelation. To us it presents itself embodied in a volume, whose credentials to be of Divine authority have first to be examined.

XII.

The Bible is a heterogeneous compilation;

A book is before us professing to contain the record of two miraculous dispensations communicated by God to his creatures; the one between three and four thousand years ago, the other nearly two thousand. When was it written, and who was its author?

It is a compilation of distinct works, in various styles of composition, history, poetry, political laws, prophetic warnings, moral instruction, and familiar epistles; written by different authors, at various periods; without direct recognition of one another, except, in general, that the old covenant is acknowledged by the writers of the new; and without any express claim to Divine inspiration.

XIII.

subject to many critical alterations.

The New Testament, though now we have it in a settled canon, and authorized version, "appointed to be read in churches", has been subject to various alterations, and to a critical sectarian warfare, from the

Jesus and to reject Him, found a ready excuse (an excuse which would not be listened to now), by attributing his miracles to the magical arts which in those days were commonly believed in. And, again, though they saw many miracles which we only read of, they did not see that great miracle (as it may be called) which is before our eyes, in the fulfilment of prophecy since their time. They could see, indeed, many prophecies fulfilled in Jesus; but we have an advantage over them in witnessing the more complete fulfilment of the prophecies respecting the wonderful spread of his religion."*

If the transmission of Divine truth through human instrumentality presents difficulties in the way of our reception of it, they are such as it is healthful to overcome; forcing us to a careful watchfulness of its progress, and a cultivation of all kinds of knowledge that relate to it. And this is not excluding the ignorant from the benefit of it. It is good for men to be able to rely on one another's word, not shutting their own eyes, but for report of what is beyond their sight. Is it on this subject that we must first begin to find all human testimony unreliable, when almost the whole of our knowledge of the past and present is derived from it! If we believe in profane history, as the general rule, notwithstanding some recognised mistakes, so may we also in sacred. Neither can we doubt that the Providence of God watches over His own work; and will not permit any human blundering to mar its efficacy.

TION AS CONTAINED IN THE BIBLE:

SUPPORTED BY EXTERNAL EVIDENCE.

XII. The more various are the contents of the sacred volume, the more remarkable is it that they should have a common object and a common spirit.

"Is it not possible to pursue a leading idea from Genesis to Malachi, and would not any observant and reflecting man rise up from a study of the whole, with a strongly excited expectation that something still better was to come—something towards which his attention has been repeatedly directed—something to the success and glory of which all that he had been reading was, by its own account, preparatory?"†

XIII. "If any book were forged by some learned man in these days, and put forth as a translation from an ancient book, there are many other learned men, of this and various other countries, and of different religions, who would be eager to make an inquiry, and examine the question, and would be sure to detect any forgery, especially on an important subject. And it is the same with translators. Many of these

* Whately's *Christian Evidences*. Lesson V. § 4.

† Miall's *Bases of Belief*, p. 408.

time when Marcion the Gnostic heretic accepted only Matthew of the Gospels, and of Paul's Epistles only ten;—on to the time when the Vulgate, (Jerome's Latin translation, completed in A.D. 384,) pronounced authentic by the Council of Trent, and sanctioned by Popes to be used for ever, was decried by Protestants, who had their Luther's version, their Elzevir edition, their Beza's and Erasmus's, to set in opposition to it;—down to the present time, when not only Unitarians have their "Improved Version", but the most orthodox commentators are obliged to admit critical improvements into their received text.

XIV.

The canon of the N. T. was long unsettled; and contains disputed books.

It is not certainly known when or by whom the canon of the New Testament was formed, but it is generally believed to have been settled by authority at the Council of Laodicea A.D. 363. Eusebius (A.D. 315) distinguished the undisputed books from the disputed (the latter being Hebrews, James, II. Peter, II. and III. John, Jude, and Revelations), showing that there was controversy as to which were genuine. But in that age, though it was virulent enough in party animosity,* there was little acquaintance with the true principles of criticism, and little means of exercising it after at least 200 years had buried in obscurity the real origin of the books. It is true there is a chain of tradition respecting them, extending to nearly the apostolic age, handed down to us in the writings of the early Christian Fathers; but it is of a very vague kind, consisting chiefly of repetitions of passages which are also found in our sacred books, and therefore supposed to be quotations from them, though, except in a few instances, they are not mentioned as such, and may just as well be an echo of traditional sayings, as extracts from written works. And even if they were quotations from books bearing the same name, and general form of ours; because these isolated passages agree, it does not at all follow that the resemblance was complete in every part. The original works might have been altered and remodelled again and again before we have any distinct information about them. Some of the Epistles of Paul, as they were the earliest, appear also the most genuine of the sacred writings; but every critical probability is that the historical books existed at first as mere fragments, until, perhaps gradually, they were compiled into their present form.

The authenticity of the books in general ill supported by early tradition.

* See for strong corroboration of the above, *The Rise and Progress of Christianity*, just published, [1854], by R. W. Mackay. Chapman's Quarterly Series, No. 7.

are at variance with each other as to the precise sense of some particular passage; and many of them are very much opposed to each other, as to the doctrines which they believe to be taught in Scripture. But all the different versions of the Bible agree as to the main outline of the history, and of the discourses recorded: and therefore an unlearned Christian may be as sure of the general sense of the original as if he understood the language of it, and could examine it for himself; because he is sure that unbelievers, who are opposed to all Christians, or different sects of Christians, who are opposed to each other, would not fail to point out any errors in the translations made by their opponents. Scholars have an opportunity to examine and inquire into the meaning of the original works; and therefore the very bitterness with which they dispute against each other, proves that where they all agree they must be right. All these ancient books, in short, and all the translations of them, are in the condition of witnesses placed in a witness-box, in a court of justice; examined and cross-examined by friends and enemies, and brought face to face with each other, so as to make it certain that any falsehood or mistake will be brought to light."*

XIV. "Christian writers and Churches appear to have soon arrived at a very general agreement upon the subject, (of the ascription of the gospels to their respective authors,) and that without the interposition of any public authority. When the diversity of opinion, which prevailed and prevails among Christians in other points, is considered, their concurrence in the canon of scripture is remarkable, and of great weight, especially as it seems to have been the result of private and free inquiry. We have no knowledge of any interference of authority in the question before the council of Laodicea in the year 363."†

"In the epistle of Barnabas, the companion of Paul (well authenticated) appears the following remarkable passage:—'Let us, therefore, beware lest it come upon us, *as it is written*, there are many called, few chosen.' From the expression, 'as it is written,' we infer with certainty, that, at the time when the author of this epistle lived, there was a book extant, well known to Christians, and of authority amongst them, containing these words, 'Many are called, few chosen.' Such a book is our present Gospel of St. Matthew, in which this text is twice found, and is found in no other book now known. The writer of the epistle was a Jew. The phrase, 'it is written,' was the very form in which the Jews quoted their scriptures.... The epistle was probably by very few years posterior to those of St. Paul."‡ Quotations from the Gospels, (without, however, being specified as quotations,) are found in epistles of Clement, bishop of Rome, and of Hermas,

* Whately's *Christian Evidences*. Lesson III. p. 28.

† Paley's *Evidences*. Part I. Chap. IX. Proposition VI.

‡ Paley's *Evidences*. Part I. chap. IX. § I.

XV.

The names of authors of Gospels are conjectural.

It is especially necessary that the Gospels, which contain the history of Jesus Christ, should be well authenticated; but the external attestation to them is very meagre and unsatisfactory. The names of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are first attributed to them, the two former by Papias, as quoted by Eusebius, (his own writings being lost,) in A.D. 116;* the two latter by Irenæus in A.D. 178†: and of the persons so named we know nothing certainly besides what is told in the books themselves. Matthew is *supposed* to be the apostle so called in the Gospel history; Mark is reported, unanimously, to be the follower of Peter, and *conjectured* to be the same as the nephew of Barnabas alluded to Col. IV. 10; Luke is agreed to be a companion of Paul (lately suggested to be the same as Silas‡); while the writer of the fourth Gospel differs from the rest by declaring himself to be "the disciple whom Jesus loved," a periphrases for the Apostle John, but has no external voucher for the fact till Irenæus confirms it nearly 100 years afterwards. The important point whether the Gospel historians had personal knowledge of what they relate, is thus supported by very slight external testimony. The second and third evangelists indeed are not thought to pretend to it, Mark being supposed to have gathered his information from Peter, and Luke saying expressly that he had collected his materials from others. The Gospel of Matthew is preeminent in importance for establishing the historical truth of Christianity; but its origin is so obscure that we do not even know certainly in what language it was written. According to early tradition, Matthew wrote in Hebrew; but whether our present Greek is a translation, or a duplicate original, written also by the Apostle, has been warmly contested, even amongst orthodox critics;§ while it has been shewn probable by others, that the original *sayings*, λογια, of Matthew mentioned by Papias, were only fragments, subsequently worked up into a consecutive history.

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* Lardner's *Credibility of the Gospel History*. Ed. 1755. Vol. I. p. 239.

† Ibid, p. 344.

‡ *Inquiry concerning the Origin of Christianity*, by C. C. Hennell. 2nd Ed: 1841. p. 152.

§ *Pictorial Family Bible*. Introduction to Matthew.

both mentioned by St. Paul; of Ignatius, who became bishop of Antioch about 37 years after Christ's ascension, and therefore probably known to apostles,—who also quotes from Paul's epistles, both by name and without—; and of Polycarp, (taught by apostles, as is testified by Irenæus, and by them appointed bishop of Smyrna,) in one short undoubted epistle by whom, we have no less than 40 clear allusions to books of the New Testament, chiefly from St. Paul, but many from the gospels. They are quoted by Papias A.D. 116; by Justin Martyr about 140; and abundantly onwards, by writers of remote countries, as books well known and highly revered. No apocryphal writing has the same testimony. Quotations are so thickly sown in the works of Origen A.D. 230, that Dr. Mill says, "If we had all his works remaining, we should have before us almost the whole text of the Bible." Dr. Lardner says of Tertullian, "that there are more, and larger, quotations of the small volume of the New Testament in this one Christian author, than there are of all the works of Cicero in writers of all characters for several ages."

XV. "Papias expressly ascribes the respective gospels to Matthew and Mark; and in a manner which proves, that these gospels must have publicly borne the names of these authors at that time, and probably long before." Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp, who was the disciple of John, thus testifies the genuineness of the gospels within little more than a hundred years after they were published:* "We have not received the knowledge of the way of our salvation, by any others than those by whom the gospel has been brought to us. Which gospel they first preached, and afterwards, by the will of God, committed to writing, that it might be for time to come the foundation and pillar of our faith.—For after that our Lord rose from the dead, and they (the apostles) were endowed from above with the power of the Holy Ghost coming down upon them, they received a perfect knowledge of all things. They then went forth to all the ends of the earth, declaring to men the blessing of heavenly peace, having all of them, and every one alike, the gospel of God. Matthew there, among the Jews, writ a gospel in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching the gospel at Rome, and founding a church there. And after their exit, Mark also, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, delivered to us in writing the things that had been preached by Peter. And Luke, the companion of Paul, put down in a book the gospel preached by him (Paul). Afterwards John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned upon his breast, he likewise published a gospel while he dwelt at Ephesus in Asia."

It is true that the precise date at which the gospels were written cannot now be fixed with certainty; and it is also true that the indica-

* Paley's *Evidences*, test. VI. and X.

XVI.

Dates uncertain; and fixed by theological bias.

The date at which they were written, has also been matter of much difference of opinion, and *has been fixed by theological bias.* This is shown conspicuously with regard to Matthew. Speaking of the time he wrote, Dr. Kitto says, "the various alternatives that have been suggested range over 27 years; the earliest date advocated being A.D. 37, and the latest being 64." Now it is a point of peculiar importance to know the date of this Gospel, because its character is affected by ascertaining whether the clear and precise prophecies which it gives respecting the siege of Jerusalem were written or not *before* the event. The siege lasted from 66—70. Lardner, in considering the question of the date of the Gospel, sees reason to conclude that it was written *not before* 63 or 64; but he *assumes* that "the predictions must have been written before they were accomplished."* This is a specimen of the fairness of theological critics. The strong ground for believing the reverse, viz.: that the gospel was not written till near the end of the siege, when its catastrophe might easily be foreseen, that is, between 68—70, is that down to that period the prophecy accurately corresponds with the historical facts, and no farther: for after the tribulation of those days, the sun was *not* darkened, neither did the Son of Man appear in the clouds of heaven before that generation had passed away.†

XVII.

No special care of Providence was manifested in the preservation of them.

The date and authorship of the fourth Gospel have also been subject to much controversy, chiefly on dogmatic grounds. But this cannot be entered on here, where the design is not so much to argue the question of the authenticity of these books, which would require a volume, as to show that it is very *susceptible* of argument; that great *doubt* lies upon it; that there is so much uncertainty about the composition, as well as the collection of the sacred writings, as is inconsistent with the idea of their being a special in-

* *History of Apostles*, ch. v. sec. 3. Quoted by Hennell, p. 109 note.

† See *Origin of Christianity.* p. 97. *et seq.*

tions respecting it gathered from internal evidence, will depend upon the judgment formed of the character of the contents. If the writers be found faithful historians in all other respects, their word is not to be doubted that what they represent as prophecy was really such.

XVI. "The scriptures were in very early times collected into a distinct volume. Ignatius, who was bishop of Antioch within 40 years after the ascension, and who had lived and conversed with the apostles, speaks of the gospel and of the apostles in terms which render it very probable, that he meant by the gospel, the book or volumes of the Gospels, and by the apostles, the book or volume of their Epistles. . . . About 80 years after this we have direct proof, in the writings of Clement of Alexandria, that these two names, 'Gospel' and 'Apostles,' were the names by which the writings of the New Testament, and the division of these writings, were usually expressed."* Later testimonies to the same effect are abundant.

They were called, beginning from Polycarp, "the holy scripture," —"the divine oracles,"—"the divinely inspired scriptures,"—"the true evangelical canon."† Commentaries were written upon them; harmonies formed out of them; different copies carefully collated; and versions of them made into different languages. "The fourth century supplies a catalogue of fourteen writers, who expended their labours upon the books of the New Testament, and whose works or names are come down to our times." Eusebius (A.D. 315) says, "that the writings of the apostles had obtained such an esteem as to be translated into every language both of Greeks and Barbarians, and to be diligently studied by all nations."‡

They were appealed to as of mutually recognised authority in the controversies amongst Christians of different sects, and attacked as such by enemies. A catalogue of the books of scripture is to be found in the works of Origen (A.D. 230) containing all our present number except the epistles of James and Jude, and none that we have not.§

XVII. Paley sums up his chapter on the authenticity of the Historical Scriptures thus: "These are strong arguments to prove that the books actually proceeded from the authors whose names they bear, (and have always borne, for there is not a particle of evidence to show that they ever went under any other); but the strict genuineness of the books is perhaps more than is necessary to the support of our proposition. For even supposing that, by reason of the silence of antiquity, or the loss of records, we knew not who were the writers of the four Gospels, yet the fact, that they were received as authentic accounts of the transaction

* Paley's *Evidences*. Part I. chap. IX. sec. III. † *Ibid.* sec. IV.
‡ Paley's *Evidences*. Part I. chap. IX. sec. VI. § *Ibid.* sec. VII. IX. X.

strument in the hands of Providence for the salvation of the human race. If our faith in them is to be founded on a reasonable examination of evidence, it is surely important for us to know when and by what description of persons they were written; and to be sure that they have been preserved in all their integrity. But of this no means are left of satisfying ourselves. They do not emerge from their historical obscurity till the religion has had time to establish itself in a worldly manner, and to provide for its literature a safe and honourable custody.

AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN REVELA-
THAT ITS DIVINE CHARACTER IS NOT

XVIII. It is difficult to understand.

If we could suppose an intelligent person of our own day, otherwise well cultivated, but who had never heard a word about Christianity, opening the New Testament for the first time, he may well be imagined to ask, with the eunuch in the Acts, "How can I understand, except some man should guide me?" Beyond some passages of simple narrative, attractive from their deep human feeling, but mixed up with marvellous legends that without religious prepossessions he would at once set down as the childish fabrications of an ignorant age; and except the moral precepts, whose excellence would arrest his attention;—if he went on to try and find the purport of the whole, and the cause of the solemn earnestness of its tone, he might read it over and over again, and yet puzzle himself in vain. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"; —saved from what?—and how believe?—believe all that is here told of this mysterious personage?—What has this to do with us, except indeed as matter of historical curiosity, and moral interest?

XIX. Requiring much learning.

That the Christian Scriptures should be so entirely conceived in Jewish modes of thought, and that, without explanation of surrounding circumstances and opinions, they should merely speak their own words, without seeming care for their intelligibility to any but their cotemporary countrymen: is undoubtedly the strongest proof that could be given of their genuine antiquity; but this is, *regarding them as merely human documents.* If we are to consider them as providentially designed for the enlightenment of all ages, it is hard to be accounted for.

upon which the religion rested, and were received as such by Christians at or near the age of the apostles, by those whom the apostles had taught, and by societies which the apostles had founded; this fact, I say, connected with the consideration, that they are corroborative of each other's testimony, and that they are further corroborated by another contemporary history, taking up the story where they had left it, . . . and confirmed by letters written by the apostles themselves . . . . (the present, and no other story, being referred to by a series of Christian writers, down from their age to our own; being likewise recognised in a variety of institutions, which prevailed, early and universally, amongst the disciples of the religion); and that so great a change, as the oblivion of one story and the substitution of another, under such circumstances, could not have taken place; this evidence would be deemed, I apprehend, sufficient to prove concerning these books, that, whoever were the authors of them, they exhibit the story which the apostles told, and for which, consequently, they acted, and they suffered."*

TION AS CONTAINED IN THE BIBLE:

SUPPORTED BY INTERNAL EVIDENCE.

XVIII. "In the life of Jesus Christ, as recorded by the evangelists, we have a display of the moral aspects of the Divine character and will, adapted to the wants of our religious nature. That embodiment of truth after which human hearts, in all times, have instinctively craved, which brings God within range of our moral sympathies, and invites a trusting and affectionate response, is now before us, certified as such by the authority of reason. 'He that hath seen me,' said the Messiah, 'hath seen the Father.' The living book in which we are to read God's mind in relation to his creature man, lies open to the inspection of our hearts, as the book of nature lies open to our eyes and intellects. . . . God is in the life of his Son—in his discourses and his miracles—in his labours and endurance—in his daily tasks and in his nightly retreats—in his sublime patience, his unwearied benevolence, his touching tenderness—in his tears, his agony, his trial, his death—in his resurrection from the dead—in his ascension from the Mount of Olives. This entire history, so strange, yet so human, so unlike all other history, yet so consistent with our highest conceptions of religious fitness, is a vivid adumbration to our hearts of the Great Unseen."†

XIX. "There is little or nothing in the sacred writings of Christianity calling attention to the fact that it is making a discovery of truths which the human mind could never have reached. All the primary notions of divine things which it embodies, it rather takes for granted,

* Paley's *Evidences*. chap. x. Recapitulation.

† Miall's *Bases of Belief*, pp. 352—3.

Salvation from what?—not from natural death, not from our sins, not from the punishment of them in this world. From the "wrath to come";—but what is meant by this threatened peril, of which we know nothing save from this supposed revelation itself?——It needs a thorough acquaintance with Jewish history, not merely in our Old Testament, which would be quite insufficient to clear up the matter, but with the subtleties of rabbinical lore, and also with the Greek-Alexandrian philosophy which was now diffusing its influence over the Jewish mind, before we can know what the apostles meant by being saved by Christ. We must comprehend the notion with which they were imbued, derived from savage antiquity, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins," before we can see how it was necessary that "Christ should die in order that all be made alive." We must know what the Hebrews looked for in their Messiah Prince, and what the Platonists understood by their Divine Logos, before we can comprehend the meaning of calling Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. We must know the ideas of both respecting the Divine essence, before we can conceive in what sense they called him the Son of God. We must know what they thought of the human soul, and its abode in Hades, before we can appreciate their doctrine of the resurrection of the body, and rejoice in the deliverance they proclaim from the second death.—Is this the manner in which God reveals himself?

XX.

**The books of the N. T. are not uniform in doctrine.**

From this book, which contains the doctrine of Christian salvation, have been derived innumerable varieties of belief; sectarians of the most opposite creeds appealing to its authority, and adducing from it a sanction for directly contrary opinions. Could this be, if it spoke clearly and intelligibly? The fact is that the different writers of the New Testament do not agree with one another, but betray an independence of judgment on subjects commonly considered of vital importance.* And between the earlier and the latest writings, there is a perceptible growth of doctrine, natural and necessary in a human point of view, but irreconcileable with a supernatural one. The chief point in which this is conspicuous, is their estimation of the dignity of Christ, rising from "the man approved of God" (Acts II. 22) to "Him by whom all things were created." (Coloss. I. 16.) It is difficult to conceive how the carpenter's son, who trod the shores of Galilee and died on the cross at Jerusalem, should come to be regarded as the Lord from Heaven, the Son of the Most High: yet when we consider that a few years beyond the apostolic age, when the ink of the canonical scriptures was scarcely dry, he was already exalted into the Most High Himself,—to the scandal and horror of the simple Hebrew Christians, who, however, were soon silenced by the victorious party, and stigmatized with

* *E. g.* between Paul and James, on faith and works. See Mackay's *Rise and Progress of Christianity.* Part II. on the *Pauline Controversy.*

than announces as novelties. . . . But, undoubtedly, there is an aspect in which Christianity assumes an air of exclusive pretension. Taking it at its own word, its one purpose is to 'give LIFE'—SPIRITUAL LIFE. Herein consists its originality—it comes 'to save.' The knowledge it professes to communicate is appropriated by the affections rather than the understanding. The religious ideas which it sets before man are ideas to be comprehended by the heart. The grand mystery which it unveils is the LOVE of God—and this can only be recognised and appreciated by sympathetic emotions. Its object is not to increase knowledge, as such—for according to its own declaration 'knowledge puffeth up'—but to beget and nourish love by that kind of knowledge which is laid hold of not by the head, but the heart."*

"Take the fundamental religious ideas pervading the Scriptures—the One God, eternal, immortal, invisible—man, his creature, dependent on him, and accountable to him—universal guilt, capable, however, of being removed by forgiveness—a future state of rewards and punishments—the efficacy of prayer—the principle of mediation :—the claim of the Christian faith to be received as a revelation of God is not based upon its origination of these ideas. . . . These constitute, as it were, but the raw material of the system—the simple elements which enter into its composition and structure. It is the special *form* given to these which warrants us in regarding Christ's gospel as the spiritual tuitional agency which the state of mankind required. . . . Christianity does with these primary religious ideas, what the artistic mind does with its blocks of stone—puts them together, shapes them, makes them exhibit an unity of meaning—in one word, brings out to our spiritual faculties and emotions, a finished embodiment in human fact and history, of the divine character, relationship, and purpose—and designates it 'The image of the invisible God."†

XX. It has been a standing argument with Roman Catholics against laying open the Bible to the multitude, that undisciplined minds would find there a sanction for all kinds of doctrine ; whence, they say, has proceeded the infinite variety of sects into which the "right of private judgment" has divided Protestantism. But to this the Protestant replies, that the guidance he needs to keep him from making his own human ideas stand as the interpretation of the Scriptures, is not that of men, but of the Spirit of God ; in humble reliance upon which whoever has applied himself to the sacred volume, has surely found all that was needful for his salvation. Most of the differences between sects arise from undue dwelling upon points that are rather of speculative curiosity than of practical faith, and respecting which no explicit revelation has been given ;‡ but in all that is essential, it is generally allowed that all Christians are agreed ; except indeed, perhaps, those who lie at the opposite

* *Bases of Belief*, p. 78. † *Ibid*, pp. 81, 82.

‡ See Archbishop Whately's Essay on *The practical character of Revelation.*

the brand of heresy, as the Arians, in a later day, when they made the same protest, were also put down by the finally triumphant Athanasians;—when we consider that the course of doctrine was set so decidedly in this direction, always advancing to this stupendous consummation, it presents itself to us as the natural order of things, that the change, gradual and urged on by strong and obvious motives, might have come from a very simple beginning.

XXI.

They have the mythyic legends common to old eastern religions.

To the unsophisticated reader we have imagined, this would appear but like one of the Avatars of the Indian mythology, like an idea borrowed from old Grecian, or older Egyptian fable. Certainly, he would infer, if his mind were stored with human learning instead of theological prepossessions, the writers of these books were men unwilling that their Hebrew literature should be destitute of legends that might rival the rich poetic lore of other orientals. The mythic theory of Strauss would approve itself as offering an easy solution of the matter. Jesus was born of a Virgin: so were all the great demi-gods of antiquity. He holds the powers of nature subject to his command; he is waited upon by angels; he has a personal conflict with the Evil One; suffers a temporary defeat, and offers himself a voluntary sacrifice, amidst thunderings and quakings of sympathetic Nature; and is finally wafted bodily to Heaven:—all these things are found under various forms, again and again, in the heroic legends of the east, as if they had been framed after one original type; which has been ingeniously explained as a figurative representation of the astronomical changes in the heavens. Easily would this explanation be satisfactory of the miraculous conception, the temptation, the transfiguration, the angelic visitings, the ascension, and perhaps other parts: and that this sort of embellishment should have been added to the life of Jesus, will not seem incredible, when the state of civilization of the age is taken into account, and the absence of means of circulating intelligence of what was actually going on, and when it is remembered how little certainty there is as to the date and authorship of these writings. "There is nothing in the ancient testimonies to exclude the supposition, which all *à priori* considerations render probable, that our four Gospels only gradually received their present form after the materials of which they are composed had been long floating on the current of oral tradition. It is only necessary to form a just conception of the state of Palestine in order to understand how, even during the lifetime of Jesus, legends respecting him might be current. The popular Jewish mind with its native love of the marvellous, stimulated by a new religious enthusiasm, with its stirring national traditions and Messianic expectations, was exactly the soil for the fertile production of myths. If it be admitted that the biblical history is less offensive to our conception of Deity than the heathen mythology, it is not less at variance with

extremes of Christianity,—those who lay reason entirely prostrate before the human authority of priests, and those who give it such a preponderance over faith as scarcely to suffer it to yield to the authority of God.

As to a difference in the representation of the dignity of Christ, it is true that there are portions of the New Testament upon which the Unitarians rest their assertion of his simple humanity, while from others the body of Christians derive their belief of his divinity; but this is explained by the doctrine of the two-fold nature of Him who was the "Word made flesh." And it was natural that the human impressions of Jesus, which at first were necessarily the strongest in the minds of the disciples, should gradually be merged in the predominant sense of his divinity.

XXI. "The Classical mythology, the Egyptian mythology, and the Hindoo mythology, (always restricted to the nations in whose remote barbarism they originated, and with whose immemorial traditions they were intertwined), may be studied long enough before they make a single proselyte among those different races and different nations who did receive, who have received, and who persist in receiving, the *myths* of Christianity as historic *verities.* So that the very least that can be said is, that the compilers of the Gospel have, with an utterly incomprehensible ingenuity, infinitely transcended all other masters of fable and legend, and have succeeded in making dreams wilder than ever poet feigned, wear to minds of different ages and races (for here lies the stress of the argument) the aspect of genuine history."*

"On the hypothesis that the miracles of the New Testament were either a congeries of deeply contrived fictions, or accidental myths, subsequently fabricated;—the infidel must believe, on the *former* supposition, that, though even transient success in literary forgery, when there are any prejudices to resist, is among the rarest of occurrences, yet that *these* forgeries, the hazardous work of many minds, making the most outrageous pretensions, and necessarily challenging the opposition of Jew and Gentile, were successful, beyond all imagination, over the hearts of mankind; and have continued to impose, by an exquisite appearance of heartless truth, and a most elaborate mosaic of feigned events artfully cemented into the ground of true history, on the acutest minds of different races and different ages; while, on the *second* supposition, he must believe that accident and chance have given to these legends their requisite appearance of historic plausibility, and on *either* supposition, he must believe (what is infinitely more wonderful) that the world, while the fictions were being published, and in the known absence of the facts they asserted to be true, suffered itself to be befooled *into* the belief of their truth, and *out* of its belief of all the systems it *did* previously believe to

* *Reason and Faith.* Appendix. Rogers's Essays from the Edinburgh Review. Vol. II., p. 348.

the idea which is the very essence of modern culture,—that, namely, of the invariability of cause and effect, or, to express it theologically, the conviction that 'God acts upon the world as a whole immediately, but on each part only by means of His action on every other part, that is to say, by the laws of nature.' The true conception of the myth does away with the imputation of fraud or premeditated deception. A myth is the gradually wrought expression of popular ideas, which embody themselves, not in the language of abstractions and generalities, but in imagined facts corresponding to the genius of the community. In the case of the early Jewish Christians the material for their myths was amply accumulated in the traditionary details concerning the Messiah, drawn by rabbinical interpretation from the Old Testament. These traditions they firmly believed; but, on the other hand, they were equally convinced that Jesus was the Messiah. The natural result was the transference and accommodation to the life of Jesus of all the Messianic characteristics—a blending together of what the Messiah was expected to be, with what Jesus actually was."*

XXII.

**Accounts of Jesus are incomplete, and not like those of eye-witnesses.**

It is indeed not conceivable that this mythical colouring should have been given by writers who were eye-witnesses, and therefore it tends strongly to disprove their being such; showing itself as it does, not only in the peculiar legends,† but in the pervading tone, especially in the manner of speaking of the exalted position of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, which is more as if it were a doctrine for which all were prepared, than a matter of their own personal knowledge. And there are also many other indications of a deficiency in respect to the latter.

It must strike every one how far these books are from giving us a complete account of the *life* of Jesus. With exception of the legendary notices of his birth, the entire period embraced by the narrative is on the largest computation, three years, but most probably only one year. And the information given relates solely to his public mission: we have none of those private details of family circumstances which it seems incredible that intimate companions should not have afforded. It is not denied, indeed, that many life-like incidents are recorded, which strike with an air of reality. Such are to be found especially in Matthew, which may well have been written, or handed down traditionally from an eye-witness, who may have been the Apostle himself. "But that this eye-witness was the compiler of this *whole* gospel, would be very difficult to reconcile with the impression given by reading it. In addition to (other points), the notices of time and place are in general far

* *Analysis of Strauss's Life of Jesus*, in Chapman's *Analytical Catalogue*. See also *Life of Jesus*, English Translation, 1846. Vol I. p. 85.

† The account of the "Nativity" in Luke is a remarkable specimen of these. See Strauss's *Life of Jesus*. Vol. I. p. 179, et seq.

be true; and that it acted thus notwithstanding persecution from without, as well as prejudice from within; that, strange to say, the strictest historic investigations bring this compilation of fictions or myths—even by the admission of Strauss himself—within thirty or forty years of the very time in which all the alleged wonders they relate are said to have occurred; wonders which the perverse world knew it had *not* seen, but which it was determined to believe, in spite of evidence, prejudice, and persecution! In addition to all this, the infidel must believe that the men who were engaged in the compilation of these monstrous fictions, chose them as the vehicle of the purest morality; and, though the most pernicious deceivers of mankind, were yet the most scrupulous preachers of veracity and benevolence! Surely of him who can receive all these paradoxes—and they form but a small part of what might be mentioned—we may say, 'O infidel, great is thy Faith!'"*

"The worth of this very ingenious theory may be settled by a single question—Does the supposed mythical crystallization, as we have it in the life of Christ, correspond with the Messianic ideas previously held in solution by the Jewish people? Would minds full of Old Testament notions, or rather, of notions derived from a perverted interpretation of Old Testament history and prophecy, have ultimately deposited a mythical form resembling in any one of its aspects the life of Christ?... It is notorious that the Jews, reading their prophets by the interpretative light kindled by their own national pride, expected a Messiah the very opposite in all respects to the one described in the gospel narratives. They looked for a prince and a conqueror, armed with Divine power to smite, overthrow, and subjugate their foes. If their preconceptions had taken mythic form, and Old Testament ideas filtering through the national mind had merely become concrete in the New—if this alleged miracle is but a reproduction of one performed by Elisha, and that, of one performed on Elijah—how comes it that *Moses* is consigned to such marked neglect, more especially as the tone of his supernatural works harmonized so completely with Jewish conceptions of what would be the Messiah's object? Why have we not fire from heaven to consume opponents, or plagues to worry them, or at least, legions of angels to terrify them? Can any one really believe that national religious sentiment in the country and age of Jesus Christ, was such as, if left to express itself concerning the Messiah that was to come, would associate miraculous power exclusively with gentleness, and employ it in acts of goodness towards the ecclesiastically despised, and outcast and banned? The theory... clears a space for itself by showing that any naturalistic interpretation, once so fashionable in Germany, and still adopted by some sceptics in this country, is manifestly untenable and absurd. It admits, by implication, that the Jesus Christ of history so corresponds with the

* *Reason and Faith*, Ed. Rev. October, 1849. Rogers's Essays. vol. II., p. 286.

from being so complete as one would expect from an eye-witness. There are continual chasms in the itinerary of Jesus; and notwithstanding the apparent endeavour to preserve the connexion of the story by joining the incidents together with such phrases as 'At that time'—'And when'—'Then'—'From that time forth,' &c., there are so many abrupt transitions, that it is difficult to imagine that the writer could have been travelling companion to Jesus for any length of time, as the disciples are represented to have been. For instance, ch. xv. 21, Jesus goes from Gennesaret near the sea of Galilee, to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, a distance of nearly 50 miles, and back again; and nothing is told as to the object or incidents of this journey except the affair of the Syrophenician woman. In mentioning the many journeys of Jesus and his followers about the country, an eye-witness could hardly have avoided giving some particulars about the manner in which they were performed, such as the method of journeying, the number of the party, the difficulties from roads and weather, the houses at which they stayed, and the like. Such minutiæ, however trifling, are almost inevitably interwoven with the narrations of an eye-witness. In Matthew, they are wanting to such a degree, that we cannot even guess whether Jesus performed his numerous land journeys on foot, by mules, or some other mode of conveyance. The difference between the narratives of a travelling companion and those of a second-hand narrator, is seen very well by comparing Luke's account of Paul's latter journeys with Matthew's indistinct sketches of those of Jesus, viz., 'He *departed* from Galilee and *came* into the coasts of Judea,' 'when Jesus *came* into the coasts of Cesarea Philippi,' &c."*

XXIII. Artistic design is apparent in the evangelists.

Much has been said about the artless simplicity of the Gospel narratives: but when they are examined in an unprejudiced spirit, like any other valuable remains of antiquity, this judgment is found little discriminating. It throws much light on the whole subject, to mark how the evangelists resemble other authors in showing their characteristic modes of composition, and that these are sometimes of a kind that is inconsistent with divine superintendence.

Thus, of Matthew: "It is natural that when a writer confines himself to giving relics of real discourses, he should only be able to present us with small fragments; but when he allows himself to speak for his characters, the style should become more eloquent and flowing. This distinction is very observable in Matthew. Those parts, forming perhaps the larger proportion, which appear from historical considerations to give us very nearly real sayings of Jesus, are chiefly in the fragmentary style. See the discourse of the mount, evidently a miscellaneous collection; the sayings and parables during the journeys about Galilee; and

* *Origin of Christianity*, p. 122.

—INTERNAL EVIDENCE.]

Messiah of Old Testament prophecies, that the first is but a mythical deposit of the last—*might* have been borrowed from it; and having done this service, it disappears before the palpable fact, that Jewish minds *did not* so interpret their prophets, and that if the supernatural features of those narratives are mythical concretions, they have hardened into shapes wholly unlike what Jewish national ideas of the Messiah would spontaneously have taken."*

XXII. "Another internal proof, and one within the reach of all, may be gathered from the style and character of the evangelical narratives. They are written with the simplicity, minuteness, and ease, which are the natural tones of truth, which belong to writers thoroughly acquainted with their subjects, and writing from reality. You discover in them nothing of the labour, caution, and indistinctness, which can scarcely be escaped by men who are assuming a character not their own, and aiming to impose on the world. There is a difference which we have all discerned and felt, though we cannot describe it, between an honest simple-hearted witness, who tells what he has seen, or is intimately acquainted with, and the false witness, who affects an intimate knowledge of events and individuals, which are in whole or in part his own fabrication. Truth has a native frankness, an unaffected freedom, a style and air of its own, and never were narratives more strongly characterized by these than the Gospels."†

XXIII. "It is a striking circumstance in these books, that whilst the life and character which they pourtray, are the most extraordinary in history, the style is the most artless. There is no straining for epithets or for elevation of language to suit the dignity of the great personage who is the subject. You hear plain men telling you what they know, of a character which they venerated too much to think of adorning or extolling. It is also worthy of remark, that the character of Jesus, though the most peculiar and exalted in history, though the last to be invented and the hardest to be sustained, is yet unfolded through a great variety of details and conditions, with perfect unity and consistency. The strength of this proof can only be understood by those who are sufficiently acquainted with literary history, to appreciate the difficulty of accomplishing a consistent and successful forgery. Such consistency is, in the present case, an almost infallible test. Suppose four writers, of a later age, to have leagued together in the scheme of personating the first propagators of Christianity, and of weaving, in their name, the histories of their Master's life. Removed as these men would have been from the original, and having no model or type of his character in the elevation of their own minds, they must have pourtrayed him with an

* *Bases of Belief*, pp. 253, 255.

† Channing's Works, p. 408. *Evidences of Christianity*, part I.

the few sayings attributed to Jesus during his trial. But in those parts applicable to the time of the siege, x. 17—33, xxiv. and xxv., the style expands, as if the writer were giving vent to his own thoughts, or at least modifying and amplifying freely his authentic materials. (The reproofs of the Pharisees, xxiii. are however an instance of exception, being in a very continuous form, although presenting for the most part strong appearances of genuineness.)"* "In many of the fragments are strong indications that the writer allowed himself to embellish or piece out the meagre record of a scene or discourse from his own imagination. . . . In the scene at Gethsemane, he not only relates facts which might have reached him, but gives in an equally earnest and pathetic manner the prayers and movements of Jesus, whilst his only companions, Peter, James, and John were asleep. xxvi. 36—45. In mentioning that Herod the tetrarch heard the fame of Jesus (xiv. 1), he puts into his mouth a speech very consistent with the ideas of the Christians, but not at all congruous to the supposed speaker; for the hasty conclusion that Jesus must be 'John the Baptist risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him,' and especially the proclamation of such a fear, betoken a terror-stricken conscience approaching to insanity, for which there is not sufficient support in all that remains concerning Herod Antipas. (Josephus says he put John to death deliberately from political motives.) In the account of the warning given by John to the tetrarch on a matter of the most private nature, the motives of Herod, the agreement between Herodias and her daughter, were not likely to be known so accurately by one of the lower ranks in Judea. . . . the whole account differs essentially from that of Josephus, who must have had incomparably better means of knowing the truth, than either a cotemporary tax-gatherer, or a member of the Christian sect 35 years later."†

Mark: "The style of Mark has strong peculiarities, earnestness, warmth, and almost child-like simplicity. He is contented with narrating facts, and omits all long discourses; any thing controversial or obscure he sedulously shuns. . . . Matthew's quotations from the prophets were also probably omitted because he could not see their application. . . . He endeavours to aggrandize Jesus to the utmost that his materials will allow him, by repeating again and again the amazement of beholders, ii. 12; vi. 2; the great numbers who were attracted by him, iii. 7, 8; vi. 56; so that there was no room about the door, ii. 2; so that they could not eat bread, iii. 20; vi. 31; by the reverent confession of the devils, i. 24; iii. 11; by the solemn preliminary of looking round about him previous to speaking, iii. 34; viii. 33; x. 27. But he has evidently much less talent and imagination than the compiler of the 1st Gospel, and although apparently well-disposed to enhance the marvellous complexion of his story, his additions, whether his own or selected by him, are of a very poor kind as compared with the bold poetical

* *Origin of Christianity*, p. 120. † *Ibid*, p. 117.

unsteady hand, must have marred their work with incongruous features, must have brought down their hero on some occasion to the ordinary views and feelings of men, and in particular must have been warped in their selection and representation of incidents by the private purpose which led them to this singular co-operation. That four writers, under such circumstances, should sustain throughout so peculiar and elevated a character as Jesus, and should harmonize with each other in the delineation, would be a prodigy which no genius, however pre-eminent, could achieve. I say, then, that the narratives bear strong internal marks of having been drawn from the living original, by those who had the best means of knowing his character and life."*

"The New Testament consists of histories and epistles. The historical books, namely, the Gospel and the Acts, are a continued narrative, embracing many years, and professing to give the history of the rise and progress of the religion. Now it is worthy of observation, that these writings completely answer their end; that they completely solve the problem, how this peculiar religion grew up and established itself in the world; that they furnish precise and adequate causes for this stupendous revolution in human affairs. It is also worthy of remark, that they relate a series of facts, which are not only connected with one another, but are intimately linked with the long series which has followed them, and agree accurately with subsequent history, so as to account for, and sustain it. Now, that a collection of fictitious narratives, coming from different hands, comprehending many years, and spreading over many countries, should not only form a consistent whole, when taken by themselves; but should also connect and interweave themselves with real history so naturally and intimately, as to furnish no clue for detection, as to exclude the appearance of incongruity and discordance, and as to give an adequate explanation, and the only explanation of acknowledged events, of the most important revolution in society;—this is a supposition from which an intelligent man at once revolts, and which, if admitted, would shake a principal foundation of history.—I have before spoken of the unity and consistency of Christ's character as developed in the Gospels, and of the agreement of the different writers in giving us the singular features of his mind. Now there are the same marks of truth running through the whole of these narratives. For example, the effects produced by Jesus on the various classes of society; the different feelings of admiration, attachment, and envy, which he called forth; the various expressions of these feelings; the prejudices, mistakes, and gradual illumination of his disciples; these are all given to us with such marks of truth and reality as could not easily be counterfeited. The whole history is precisely such as might be expected from the actual appearance of such a person as Jesus Christ, in such a state of society as then existed.—The Epistles, if possible, abound in marks of truth and

* Channing's Works, p. 409.

fictions of dreams, angels, and earthquakes in Matthew. See his edition of the story of the swine.... This disposition to seize upon the mere childishly marvellous without the poetical, is seen strongly in Mark's neglect of the greater part of the most eloquent discourses and parables in Matthew. By him they are either omitted or reduced to tame epitomes; whilst he devotes the space saved to the amazement and numbers of the multitudes, and other insipid amplifications."*

Luke: "From as large a collection of materials as he could obtain, it appears that Luke intended to write in order a history of Jesus from the first, but that he soon found the task too difficult with respect to the order; for, after the first few chapters, his narrative becomes so jumbled and confused, that the reader can form no clear idea of the course of events. It has the appearance of a mass of anecdotes and sayings, put down as they came to the author's notice, with very little regard to time or place, instead of a regular narrative, like Matthew's. Nearly the whole of Matthew and Mark may be traced in different parts of Luke, but much cut up and displaced. It seems probable that he endeavoured to accommodate as large a portion as he could of those two to his other materials; but finding that some sayings and facts were thus left out, in his anxiety to make his Gospel complete, he inserted the fragments where he could. ... Another indication of Luke's fidelity is, that in recording the sayings of Jesus or the traditions of such sayings, he confines himself to fragments and parables, without expanding into long discourses suitable to his own position and time, such as we find in Matthew and John.... The style of the narrative in the Acts shows that the writer was a zealous adherent of the Church, a believer in its miraculous pretensions, and therefore not disposed to examine very rigidly stories favourable to the Christian cause. In this book, he falls into the style of Josephus, Herodotus, and most ancient historians, in embellishing his story with suitable speeches. The reverence with which the sayings of Jesus were recorded, probably restrained Luke to the mere reporting of such fragments as he could collect, or nearly so; but in the Acts, he introduces numerous formal speeches."†

John: "Whilst the three first Gospels have principally an historical aim, viz., to give an account of the acts and sayings of Jesus, the object of the last is mainly an argumentative or controversial one, *i.e.*, to enforce doctrines, supply arguments, and answer objections; and this more with reference to the position and thoughts of the Ephesians in the year 97, than to those of the inhabitants of Judea in the time of Pilate. It is true that there is to some extent a blending of both stages of thought, and that the Apostle preserves probably some portion of the realities which had passed within or near his time 66 years previously. Thus his description of the notions of the priests, XI. 47, 48, their fear lest Jesus should occasion the total subversion of their state by the Romans, carries

* *Origin of Christianity*, pp. 138, 140. † *Ibid*, pp. 163, 167, 172.

reality even more than the Gospels. They are imbued thoroughly with the spirit of the first age of Christianity. They bear all the marks of having come from men plunged in the conflicts which the new religion excited, alive to its interests, identified with its fortunes. They betray the very state of mind which must have been generated by the peculiar condition of the first propagators of the religion. They are letters written on real business, intended for immediate effects, designed to meet prejudices and passions, which such a religion must first have awakened. They contain not a trace of the circumstances of a later age, or of the feelings, impressions and modes of thinking by which later times were characterized, and from which later writers could not easily have escaped. The letters of Paul have a remarkable agreement with his history. They are precisely such as might be expected from a man of a vehement mind, who had been brought up in the schools of Jewish literature, who had been converted by a sudden overwhelming miracle, who had been entrusted with the preaching of the new religion to the Gentiles, and was everywhere met by the prejudices and persecuting spirit of his own nation. They are full of obscurities growing out of these points of Paul's history and character, and out of the circumstances of the infant church, and which nothing but an intimate acquaintance with that early period can illustrate. This remarkable infusion of the spirit of the first age into the Christian Records, cannot easily be explained but by the fact, that they were written in that age by the real and zealous propagators of Christianity, and that they are records of real convictions and of actual events."*

"If you look to the style of writing in the historical books (the four Gospels and the Acts,) you will observe that neither the miracles nor the sufferings of Christ or his Apostles are boastfully set forth, and eloquently described and remarked upon; as would have been natural for writers desirous of making a strong impression upon the reader. There is no endeavour to excite wonder, or admiration, or compassion, or indignation. There is nothing, in short, such as we should have expected in writers who were making up a marvellous story to produce an effect on men's feelings and imaginations. The miracles performed, and the instances of heroic fortitude displayed, are all related, briefly, calmly, and drily, and almost with an air of indifference, as if they were matters of every-day occurrence, and which the readers were familiar with. And this is, indeed, one strong proof that the readers to whom these books were addressed,—the early Christians,—really were (as the books themselves give us to understand they were) *familiar* with these things; in short, that the persecutions endured, and the Signs displayed, by the Apostles, really were, in those times and countries, common and notorious.—You should observe, also, the candid and frank simplicity with

* Channing's Works, p. 333. *The Evidences of Revealed Religion.*

us back to the original transactions, and would be almost unintelligible unless compared with the other Gospels. The following texts bear strongly the appearance of being historical relics: I. 19; 24; 44; II. 18; III. 23; VI. 15; 30; VII. 5; X. 23; 24; XI. 47-50; 54; XIX. 12. But in most chapters narrative forms but a small part, and has generally the subsidiary office of supplying occasion for the delivery of a doctrine. The events seem to be selected and arranged merely in order to give occasion for a miracle, or a declaration of faith. The answers or objections in the dialogues are evidently inserted to conduce to the effect of the sentence which Jesus is to utter. And both friends and opponents usually make Christian admissions as full as the most zealous believer could desire; much more certainly than the degree of acquaintance with Jesus, or other circumstances implied in the story would appear to warrant.... The additional miracles in this Gospel are mostly of a more bold and marvellous character than those in the others. They are generally represented as performed in the most public manner, without the injunctions to secresy so frequent in the three first Gospels.... Admitting the greater part of this Gospel to have been written or dictated by St. John, about the year 97, for the use of the Ephesian church, we have still no guarantee of the Apostle's veracity or correctness of memory. At that time he must have been nearly 100 years old: his other writings show that he possessed a vivid imagination and strong feelings; and it is well known that such persons are apt to mingle truth and falsehood in their narrative even unintentionally. But the Apostle was also under the strongest temptation to indulge in fiction... Interest and ambition, as well as private friendship and religious zeal, urged John to be a strenuous preacher of Jesus the Messiah.... There was temptation continually to adopt or invent fresh stories of miracles, which might serve in the controversy as more indubitable proofs of a divine mission. In proportion to the distance of time and place from the scene of the original transactions, this species of imposition became more easy. Accordingly, we find but few allusions to miracles in the Epistles; abundant accounts of them in the four Gospels; and in this last Gospel, published much later than the others, and at Ephesus, bolder and more gross stories of miracles, as well as more confident appeals to them, than in any other.... Since he puts this saying into the mouth of Christ, (John IV. 48,) 'Unless ye see wonders and signs, ye will not believe,' we may infer that he himself found it necessary to supply his hearers at least with *narratives* of such wonders and signs. And at that distance of time, amongst the strangers of Ephesus, there was no one capable of controverting his statements." ... "Looking rigidly at the merit of this gospel in point of morality, it is perhaps as inferior to Matthew in this respect, as it is superior in depth of feeling and pathos. There are few, if any, of those weighty moral

which the New Testament writers describe the weakness and faults of the disciples; not excepting some of the most eminent among the Apostles. Their 'slowness of heart,' (that is, dulness of understanding,) —their want of faith (trust) in their Master,—and their worldly ambition and jealousy among themselves, are spoken of without reserve, and as freely as the faults of their adversaries. This, and other points, would be very remarkable if met with in any *one* book; but it is still more so, when the same character runs through *all* the books of the New Testament, which are no less than 27 distinct compositions, of several different kinds, written apparently at considerable intervals of time from each other, and which have come down to us as the works of no less than eight different authors. You might safely ask an unbeliever to point out the same number—or half the number—of writers in behalf of any Sect, Party, or System, all of them, without a single exception, writing with the same modest simplicity, and without any attempt to excuse, or to extol, and set off themselves."*

"The picture drawn by the Evangelists is evidently an *unstudied* one. There is nothing in it of the nature of *eulogium* and *panegyric*. ...If they had had the inclination, they do not seem to have had the *ability*, to draw a fictitious character of great moral beauty. They write like (what they were) plain, unpractised authors, without learning, or eloquence, or skill in composition."†

The imputation of dishonesty, or of any kind of incompetency in the Evangelists, cannot for an instant be admitted by any advocate of Christianity; but, except upon the ground of plenary inspiration, the natural manifestation of the varying characteristics of their own human dispositions, is so far a convincing sign of their genuineness, and adds greatly to the power of their concurrent testimony.

"Taking the New Testament as a whole, we are not disposed to deny that it bears upon the face of it many indications that its several writers were not entirely exempt from mental imperfection—but we contend that the imperfection which their works exhibit is perfectly compatible with the communication to men of infallible knowledge respecting God, his moral relation to us, his purposes with regard to us, and the religious duties which these things enforce on all who would attain unto eternal life. And if this be true, the record, equally with the revelation, satisfies the spiritual need of man in its fullest extent."‡

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* Whately's *Christian Evidences*, p. 67. † *Ibid*, p. 69.
‡ *Bases of Belief*, p. 395.

lessons of universal acceptation which we find Jesus delivering elsewhere. . . . This gospel, if alone, would leave the impression that belief in Jesus as the Christ, and the recognition of the high offices which the writer labours to attribute to him, is the chief obligation laid upon man. The commandment to love one another is certainly enforced with much strength and pathos; but the commandment partakes too much of an exclusive spirit; it is for the Christian sect alone; it is not the language of wide philanthropy, 'love all men'; but, 'I pray not for the world, but for these whom thou hast given me out of the world.' "*

XXIV. Relations of Miracles have not the air of trustworthiness.

When we examine the Gospels in this manner, trying to judge them simply on their own merits, without any supposed Divine inspiration; and seeking to realize the position of the writers and their inducements to magnify the glory of their Master, whose character and sufferings, and the promises he held out to their spiritual ambition, had won them to his cause: we are not surprised to find them full of "wonderful works which he did." Miracles belong of necessity to a miraculous revelation: so the early disciples felt, and so also Paley well argues: "In whatever degree it is probable or not very improbable that a revelation should be communicated to mankind at all, in the same degree is it probable or not very improbable that miracles should be wrought."† If our cultivated reason is shocked by the relation of them, it is because the very idea of Revelation is contrary to reason, and these results of it are a clear exposure, a *reductio ad absurdum*, of the principle at the base of it. But the question at present is how they stand as alleged facts. It is impossible here to enter upon a fair examination of them, but the following general objections to the miracles of Jesus may be urged against believing the gospel reports of them:

"I. Jesus himself put his miracles of healing upon a level with the performances of the Jewish exorcists. Matt. XII. 27.

II. He recognized the attempts of others as real miracles, making no distinction between them and his own. Mark IX. 38, 39.

III. He admits that there was more difficulty in performing some miracles than others. Matt. XVII. 21.

IV. He generally required to see that the applicants fully believed in his miraculous power before he attempted the cure. Matt. IX. 2; 27. Mark VI. 5.

V. The answers usually given by Jesus were of such a nature as to dismiss the applicants without any injury to his own credit, whatever

* *Origin of Christianity*. pp. 181; 188-9; 200. See also on the composition of the Gospels, Mackay's *Rise and Progress of Christianity*, 1854.

† Paley's *Evidences*. vol. 1. p. 3.

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XXIV. "Christianity is not only confirmed by miracles, but is in itself, in its very essence, a miraculous religion. It is not a system which the human mind might have gathered, in the ordinary exercise of its powers, from the ordinary course of nature. Its doctrines, especially those which relate to its founder, claim for it the distinction of being a supernatural provision for the recovery of the human race.... We affirm, that when Jesus Christ came into the world, nature had failed to communicate instructions to men, in which, as intelligent beings, they had the deepest concern, and on which the full development of their highest faculties essentially depended; and we affirm, that there was no prospect of relief from nature; so that an exigence had occurred, in which additional communications, supernatural lights, might rationally be expected from the Father of spirits."*

"A pervading element of supernaturalism was necessary to give completeness, authentication, and significance, to the symbol employed (by which Deity was represented in the person of Jesus Christ)... Miracles serve to mark off his life from human life in general, as the medium by which God has condescended to disclose himself, and his love, to our hearts.... They are veritable flashings forth through him of the Almighty. They put the seal of God upon his life... Granted our need of a revelation of God to our affections—granted the fitness of a human life as the medium of such a revelation—and you grant also the necessity of miracles... All is homogeneous. We must accept all, or we must reject all. No miracles, no Christianity."† "The *manner* of our Lord's miracles... is like that of the great works of God—sublimely quiet. The supernaturalism of the gospels is not a noisy, clattering, egotistic thing... There is a silence in it that awes, and a gentleness that startles, the soul... The trumpet is never blown to call the world to witness it. The occasion usually turns up in the most incidental way. ... It is anything but what we might have expected, if man's fancy or fanaticism had sketched and coloured the representation. And this view of the subject ought specially to be noted by those who ascribe the miraculous in Christ's memoirs to the after-touches of admiring and adoring followers. Pious passion does not paint in this severely sober style. The fervour which would infuse supernaturalism where there was none, would have infused more of it, and of a more ostentatious sort."‡

"On the hypothesis that the Miracles of the New Testament were masterly frauds on men's senses committed at the time and by the parties supposed in the records, the infidel must believe, that a vast number

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* Channing's Works, pp. 324. 326. *Evidences of Revealed Religion.*

† *Bases of Belief*, pp. 186. 187. ‡ *Ibid.* pp. 246. 248.

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might be the result. Matt. VIII. 13; IX. 29; XV. 23; 28; Mark X. 52; John IX. 7.

VI. In Matthew and Mark, the *more decided* miracles, such as raising the dead, curing the blind, &c., are admitted to have been done in secret. Matt. VIII. 4; IX. 30; Mark V. 43; VII. 36.

VII. The miracles were chiefly performed among the country people of Galilee, according to Matthew and Mark.

VIII. When Jesus was asked to do a public miracle in attestation of his divine mission, he not only refused to do it, but did not even appeal to his previous miracles. Matt. XVI. 1-4; comp. Mark VIII. 11; John VI. 30. It is true that Jesus is made to appeal to his miracles in answer to John the Baptist's disciples, and several times in the discourses attributed to him by John V. 36; X. 38; XIV. 10. Yet the above instances are sufficient to show that he did not usually rely upon them as the means of convincing opponents.

IX. In most of the narratives, the *saying* of Jesus and the incidents leading to it form the most conspicuous part; the accompanying miracle is but a brief echo. Matt. XV. 21-28.

X. None of those on whom the miracles were said to be performed come forward themselves to attest them in the subsequent part of the history, or play any conspicuous part in the affairs of the church, as gathered from the Acts and Epistles. The author of the Gospel of Nicodemus, which appeared at the end of the 3d century, has endeavoured to remedy the omission by making the centurion, the blind men, &c., give evidence before Pilate; but this forgery only renders the absence of any historical testimony to the same effect the more striking.

XI. None of the miracles produce any effect upon indisputable historical facts; but events go on in a natural course without the slightest symptom of supernatural disturbance. The Romans keep possession of Judea; Jesus is put to death as an innovator; his followers increase like other sects, by means of proselytism. All the miraculous consists of mere accessory incidents, which may be shaken off without hurt to the integrity of profane history, or even to the chief features of the gospel history itself.

XII. The supposed miracles had no effect on many of those who lived in the time of Jesus, and were most capable of appreciating them. John VII. 5; XII. 37; Matt. XI. 20; Mark VI. 52, comp. XVI. 14."*

Of the miracles which are said to abound in the apostolic age, it is to be observed, that the low rank in which Paul places them appears inconsistent with the supposition of their being real and indubitable ones.

XXV. The resurrection.

The crowning miracle of the gospels, however, the resurrection of Christ, requires special consideration.

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* *Origin of Christianity*, chap. IX., condensed.

of apparent miracles—involving the most astounding phenomena—such as the instant restoration of the sick, blind, deaf, and lame, and the resurrection of the dead—performed in open day, amidst multitudes of malignant enemies—imposed alike on *all*, and triumphed at once over the strongest predjudices and the deepest enmity;—those who received them and those who rejected them differing only in the certainly not very trifling particular, as to whether they came from heaven or from hell. He must believe that those who were thus successful in this extraordinary conspiracy against men's senses and against common sense, were Galilean Jews, such as all history of the period represents them; ignorant, obscure, illiterate, and, above all, previously bigoted, like all their countrymen, to the very system, of which, together with all other religions on the earth, they modestly meditated the abrogation; he must believe that, appealing to these astounding frauds in the face both of Jews and Gentiles as an open evidence of the truth of a new revelation, and demanding on the strength of them that *their* countrymen should surrender a religion which they acknowledged to be divine, and that all other nations should abandon their scarcely less venerable systems of superstition, they rapidly succeeded in both these very probable adventures; and in a few years, though without arms, power, wealth, or science, were to an enormous extent victorious over all prejudice, philosophy, and persecution; and in three centuries took nearly undisputed possession, amongst many nations, of the temples of the ejected deities. He must farther believe that the original performers, in these prodigious frauds on the world, acted not only without any assignable motive, but against all assignable motive; that they maintained this uniform constancy in unprofitable falsehoods, not only together, but separately, in different countries, before different tribunals, under all sorts of examinations and cross-examinations, and in defiance of the gyves, the scourge, the axe, the cross, the stake; that those whom they persuaded to join their enterprise, persisted like themselves in the same obstinate belief of the same 'cunningly devised' frauds; and though they had many accomplices in their singular conspiracy, had the equally singular fortune to free themselves and their coadjutors from all transient weakness towards their cause and treachery towards one another; and, lastly, that these men, having, amidst all their ignorance, originality enough to invent the most pure and sublime system of morality which the world has ever listened to, had, amidst all their conscious villainy, the effrontery to preach it, and which is more extraordinary, the inconsistency to practise it!" *

XXV. "The peculiar value of the history of the resurrection of Christ as an evidence of Christianity, is this: That it is completely certain, that

* *Reason and Faith.* Rogers' Essays. Vol. II. p. 284-6.

The following are reasons for finding incredible the accounts of his appearances after death:

"I. Not one of them comes down to us attested in such a manner as would be commonly thought sufficient to establish a fact of importance. With the exception of John, (for a faithful report of whose testimony we depend on the integrity of the Ephesian church,) not one of the supposed eye-witnesses gives direct evidence. Matthew says that Mary Magdelene saw Jesus; Paul says the same for Peter; Luke says that he appeared to Cleopas; the author of the 'Gospel according to the Hebrews' speaks for James; and in each case the probability is that the account had passed through many intermediate narrators. The accounts individually are insufficient evidence; nor can they together make up a cumulative proof, because they proceed from witnesses nominally independent, but in reality influenced by the same views and feelings. II. These accounts present irreconcilable contradictions. III. They resemble very much other tales of apparitions in the sudden coming and vanishing of Jesus. IV. It has been very common in the Jewish and Christian, as well as other churches, for those who wished to enforce a particular precept or doctrine to say that some eminent prophet, angel, or saint, had appeared to reveal it to them. Jesus appears to the two disciples, to tell them that he suffered in fulfilment of the prophecies; to the eleven in Galilee, in order to give them the baptismal commission to all nations; to the disciples at Jerusalem, to give them the power of remitting or retaining sins; and to Thomas, to proclaim the necessity of believing in his resurrection without having seen him. V. There were many who disbelieved these accounts in the earliest times. VI. Most of the attestations of the resurrection in the apostolic writings do not of necessity apply to those accounts of his appearance, but to the general doctrine that he was risen, which might be in an invisible or spiritual manner. And those which bear a further sense seem to allude to stories of visions. VII. The ascension of Jesus into heaven is related only by Luke, and by the author of the last twelve verses of Mark.* It is alluded to John xx. 17, but no account is given of it.... Thus one of the Evangelists says not a word concerning it; another, supposed to have been one of the witnesses, stops short where he approaches it; and only those two of the four who are allowed not to have been eye-witnesses (and only one of them, if Mark did not write the last 12 verses) give any account of it. The belief that Jesus must have ascended into heaven like Enoch and Elijah was likely to give rise to some dramatic descriptions of the event, as of a real scene; and one highly-coloured representation has been preserved or drawn by Luke."†

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* "It is remarkable that, if these 12 verses be omitted, as we have seen was generally done in the early copies, *Mark, the follower of Peter, relates neither the miraculous birth, the resurrection, nor the ascension of Christ.*"

† *Origin of Christianity.* p. 246-8.

the Apostles and first teachers of Christianity asserted the fact. And this would have been certain if the four gospels had been lost, or never written. Every piece of scripture recognizes the resurrection. Every epistle and writing from that age to the present, concur in representing the resurrection of Christ as part of his history, received without doubt or disagreement by all who called themselves Christians, as alleged from the beginning by the propagators of the institution, and alleged as the centre of their testimony. . . . That the apostles knowingly published a falsehood, is pretty generally given up. . . . The solution more deserving of notice is that which would resolve the conduct of the apostles into *enthusiasm ;* which would class the evidence of Christ's resurrection with the numerous stories that are extant of the apparitions of dead men. But it was not one person, but many, who saw him ; they saw him not only separately, but together, not only by night but by day, not at a distance but near, not once but several times ; they touched him, conversed with him, eat with him, examined his person to satisfy their doubts. But all this stands, I admit, upon the credit of our records. I would answer, therefore, the insinuation of enthusiasm, by a circumstance which arises out of the nature of the thing, and the reality of which must be confessed by all : viz., the non-production of the dead body. It is related in the history, what indeed the story of the resurrection necessarily implies, that the corpse was missing out of the sepulchre : it is related also in the history, that the Jews reported that the followers of Christ had stolen it away. And this, though loaded with improbabilities, was the most credible account that could be given of the matter. But it proceeds on the supposition of fraud . . . what account can be given of the *body*, upon the supposition of enthusiasm ? All accounts of spectres leave the body in the grave. The presence and absence of the dead body are alike inconsistent with the hypothesis of enthusiasm : for if present, it must have cured their enthusiasm at once; if absent, fraud, not enthusiam, must have carried it away. It is evident that if his body could have been found, the Jews would have produced it, as the shortest and completest answer to the whole story."*

"The Apostle Paul may be set down as an enthusiast, but he will hardly be accounted dishonest, even by the most inveterate scepticism. His own vision of the Lord may be regarded as a mere illusion of an over-wrought brain, but when he sums up the proof of Christ's resurrection to the Corinthian church, he surely states facts of which he had full cognizance. He declares, without any doubt, or circumlocution, that Christ was seen after his resurrection by above 500 brethren at once, most of whom, he avers, were still alive at the time of his writing. Such a statement, in such terms, and from such a man, implies that he

* Paley's *Evidences*. Part II. chap. VIII. [This argument is met in O. 35.]

The manner in which the resurrection is spoken of in the Epistles is very explanatory of the subject. The history of the Apostles in the Acts testifies that the main theme of their early preaching was that "Jesus was raised from the dead by the power of God;" but only in *one* passage, (Acts x. 40, 41,) is Peter made to say that the witnesses had actually seen Jesus: and this is merely the *report* of a speech, such as might well have been *supposed* to be uttered by Peter 40 years afterwards. In the 1st Epistle of Peter (supposing it to be genuine,) "the language is that of a man who sincerely believed that Christ had been raised from the dead; but the testimony to his having appeared again in a bodily form is wanting. The writer does not say or imply that he had seen Jesus alive again; and in verses 7 and 13, chap. I., he speaks of his *appearing* as an event still to come. The Epistle of James does not mention the resurrection of Jesus; neither do those of John and Jude allude to it." "Paul did not join the church till some time after the death of Jesus, and could therefore only say what he had been told concerning his resurrection; but as he was the founder of Gentile Christianity, the nature of his testimony forms an important feature in the inquiry. The grounds on which he embraced the cause of the church were, according to his own statement, the direction of the Holy Spirit, and his belief that the Messiahship of Jesus fulfilled the prophets.... He nowhere states that his conversion was owing to the strong evidence which the followers of Jesus were able to bring of their Master's miracles and appearance since his death; for he says, that Peter, James, and John, who were the very persons to give such information, *added nothing to him.* (Gal. II. 6. 9.) ... He is so anxious to make it appear that his own doctrine was mainly original, and independent of the assistance of those followers and relations of Christ—those to whom Christ himself had given instructions how and what to preach—that he says he communicated his Gospel to them. We may therefore conclude, that in addition to the slight information which he might have obtained of Christ's history, whilst persecuting the church, ... he owed his conversion to his own reflections, to visions, and to his interpretation of the Scriptures. These sources are enough to account for the doctrines which he preached; the ideas that the Messiah had come in the person of Jesus, that he had been raised from the dead, and was soon to appear, having been rendered notorious by the preaching of the disciples, his own resources enabled Paul to complete the scheme on which he mainly insists in his writings, viz., that faith in this Messiah superseded the law of Moses, and permitted an union between Jews and Gentiles."*

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* *Origin of Christianity.* pp. 208; 210—213.

is deposing to what he is consciously able to verify. He mentions also that the risen Lord was seen of Peter, of James, and of all the apostles. So direct an assertion would never have been made by one who had so good an opportunity of making himself acquainted with the facts of the case, during his fifteen days' residence with Peter, but upon authority deemed by him to be perfectly trustworthy. But this is not all. Peter's written testimony to the fact of Christ's resurrection we have in his own undisputed epistle. John's belief in it, even if it were true that he did not write the gospel which has been uniformly ascribed to him, pervades his first epistle. The letter of James, and also that of Jude, imply their faith. We have the testimony of James, the brother of Jesus, in his martyrdom by Herod. The labours of the other apostles sufficiently attest their unwavering belief in the fundamental fact of Christianity. So that although we have not in our hands the actual depositions of all these witnesses, we have proof enough that they believed that Christ had risen from the dead."*

"And they were sincere believers. Their lives prove this.... Now, on the hypothesis that Christ did *not* rise, this agreement, strength, and persistency of belief, is, to say the least of it, extraordinary. His death staggered all their previous notions of the Messianic reign. A fancy that he had appeared to them after death would scarcely have sufficed so to change the views, hopes, desires, and determinations of all of them, as to set them at once upon a totally different track, and keep them on it, in spite of all that they had to encounter therein, up to the very hour of their departure.... Nor was this a case in which further question might not have led at once to the resolution of all doubts.... In regard to the resurrection, supposing their belief in it to have been hastily, although honestly formed, but really at variance with fact, they must have known that it was easy enough to set themselves right. The *dead body* of Jesus, in such case, must have remained in the possession of either his enemies or his friends. If of his enemies, it is certain that it would have been produced ... if of friends, surely it would have been accessible to them. Strange that no one of them appears to have thought of this decisive test of the reality of their dreams or visions!"†

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* *Bases of Belief.* pp. 263. 264. † *Ibid.* pp. 264-267.

XXVI. Morality of the gospels is not altogether philosophically true:

Full recognition being made of the general excellence of Christian morality as a popular system, and especially of its adaptation to the wants of the time; it must be urged that it does not everywhere show itself founded upon a right and philosophical knowledge of human nature.

The great general principles, of trust in God and self-subjugation to bear and do His will, of inward purity, and of love to one's neighbour as oneself, may truly be said to be divine, since every improvement in the moral condition of mankind tends to the fulfilling of them: even these, however, requiring a continual guard by our reason, lest they should fall into abuse. For the first has been carried to unwise excess in Mahomedanism; the second in monkish asceticism; and the third is apt to cause self-deception and a confused notion of duty, because as a *command* it is impossible to be obeyed, at least in the present condition of humanity.

trust in God;

Trust in God can be called a philosophic principle only so long as the title of Deity is taken in an indefinite sense to represent the Power or Order, moral and physical, that rules in the universe. When, as eminently in Christianity, God means a personal Being, who has a providential care of his creatures, trust in him necessarily leads to an abandonment of self-exertion.

prayer;

The doctrine of Prayer,—"Ask and it shall be given you"—necessarily accompanies the idea of a Heavenly Father, loving and watching over his children:—but in experience it is not true, and in philosophy it would be an upsetting of all the laws of nature, and a check to all self-help on the part of man. The doctrine of a God hearing prayer, which attained its greatest beauty in the Christian religion, is a standing impediment in the way of the education of humanity. So long as men think they can obtain what is desirable by asking for it, they will never exert themselves; and this is true of moral and spiritual good, as well as physical.*

forgiveness of sins;

The doctrine of forgiveness of sins, (taking it now simply as delivered in the sermon on the mount, without any reference to sacrificial atonement,) strictly considered, does not deserve philosophic approbation. "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive yours", is a very low statement of the principle;—to refrain from punishing them ourselves because God will punish them, is in fact no forgiveness at all;—while the broad injunction, that sounds so beautiful as the indolent *poetry* of benevolence, "Love your enemies, that ye may be the children

* See on this and other following topics Greg's *Creed of Christendom*, chapter on *Christian Eclecticism*. See also, on prayer and self-help, *The Philosophy of Necessity*, by Charles Bray. 1841. Vol. I. pp. 94, 218; and Combe's *Constitution of Man*, passim.

—INTERNAL EVIDENCE.]

XXVI. "Resignation to the will of God is the whole of piety: it includes in it all that is good, and is a source of the most settled quiet and composure of mind. There is the general principle of submission in our nature. . . . Our resignation to the will of God may be said to be perfect, when our will is lost and resolved up into his; when we rest in his will as our end, as being itself most just and right and good."*

"Christianity lays us under new obligations to a good life, as by it the will of God is more clearly revealed, and as it affords additional motives to the practice of it, over and above those which arise out of the nature of virtue and vice; I might add, as our Saviour has set us a perfect example of goodness in our nature. Now love and charity is plainly the thing in which he has placed his religion; in which, therefore, we must place ours. He hath at once enjoined it upon us by way of command with peculiar force; and by his example, as having undertaken the work of our salvation out of pure love and good-will to mankind." "Religion, from whence arises our strongest obligation to benevolence, is so far from disowning the principle of self-love, that it often addresses itself to that very principle, and always to the mind in that state when reason presides." . . . "Supposing a distinct meaning and propriety in the words *as thyself*, the precept (to love our neighbours as ourselves) will admit of any of these senses: that we bear the *same kind* of affection to our neighbour, as we do to ourselves: or, that the love we bear to our neighbour should have *some certain proportion or other* to self-love: or, lastly, that it should bear the particular proportion of *equality*, that *it be in the same degree.*" If the latter, "it would not be attended with those consequences, which perhaps may be thought to follow from it. . . Though there were an equality of affection, yet regard to ourselves would be, and ought to be, more prevalent than attention to the concerns of others. . . Moral obligations can extend no further than to natural possibilities. It fully appears, that though we were to love our neighbour in the same degree as ourselves, so far as this is possible; yet the care of ourselves, the individual, would not be neglected; the danger of which seems the only objection against understanding the precept in this strict sense."†

A heart touched by religion cannot but hold communion with God. From no low consideration of utility, but from the simple instinct analogous to that of a child, the creature must pour forth its wants, its gratitude, its confidence, its love. "While I thus feel Thy sacred spirit breathing on my heart, and exciting these fervours of love to Thee, I cannot doubt it any more than I can doubt the reality of this animal life. . . . Surely if ever my palate felt thirst, my soul thirsteth after God. . . . If ever this wearied body knew what it was to wish for refreshment,

* Butler's *Sermons.* 1839. pp. 164. 165. *Upon the Love of God.*

† *Ibid.* pp. 139. 138. 141. 147. *Upon the Love of our Neighbour.*

of Him who maketh his sun to shine on the evil and on the good", will bear no practical application. The only principle that cannot be abused is Justice; and the idea of Justice cannot be better popularly explained than in the far nobler precept, "Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you". Apply this to the former, and does not our moral sense revolt against the treatment for ourselves of being dealt with alike for our crimes and our virtues?

That God should forgive sins at all, is an idea belonging to the artificial systems of theology. In nature, no sin is forgiven. Moral, as well as physical transgressions, draw after them their inevitable consequences, since repentance, while it modifies the future, can never undo the past. And we see that it is best it should be so; for thus only experience can be gained, and real amendment of character produced. The perception of the *certainty* of consequences, subject to no *arbitrary* deviation, is the real and effectual means of knowing the evil of sin. But theology supposes that in addition to the natural consequences of sin, which in the eye of reason are its proper and only punishment, there is also excited the Divine wrath, which has to be placated;—a human and most unworthy conception of Deity;—and thus the personal offence given to God must be atoned for by specially inflicted spiritual suffering, quite of another kind and degree from worldly retribution. God, who has been personally offended, must personally remit the penalty, in order that the culprit may be, not surely as he was before, for there are still the human results of sin hanging about him, but only freed from the judicial, arbitrary, revengeful sentence of (eternal?) alienation from Divine favour. All this is merely theological: when the low, anthropomorphic ideas of God are swept away, the whole falls to the ground, and there is no such thing remaining as forgiveness of sins.

Neither, if we analyse our own feelings, will it be seen, that a man can ever properly forgive his fellow-man, *i.e.*, regard an offender as if the offence had not been committed. True, he may possibly not think the *worse* of him, he may even in some circumstances like him the better for it, or his previous feeling may be merely strengthened and confirmed; but no human action is without producing some effect,—it can never be as if it had not been.

Yet mercy is in no degree abolished by this view. Love to our neighbours, genuine as that we bear to ourselves, will always make us tender of giving unnecessary pain; and pain that is wholesome and ameliorating we should never shun for others any more than for ourselves. Hence Love, which is not in any way contradictory to Justice, but is on the contrary "the fulfilling of the whole law", is the pure essence of Christian morality, which will only work the more effectually for being freed from the natural and human mistakes which were not yet cleared away from it in an age farther from perfect enlightenment than our own.

my soul with sweet acquiescence rests upon thy gracious bosom, O my heavenly Father; and if ever I saw the face of a beloved friend with complacency and joy, I rejoice in beholding Thy face, O Lord, and in calling Thee my Father in Christ. Such Thou art, and such Thou wilt be, for time and for eternity. What have I more to do, but to commit myself to Thee for both? leaving it to Thee to choose mine inheritance, and to order my affairs for me, while all my business is to serve Thee, and all my delight to praise Thee."*

"The offences which we are all guilty of against God, and the injuries which men do to each other, are often mentioned together: and, making allowances for the infinite distance between the Majesty of Heaven, and a frail mortal, and likewise for this, that he cannot possibly be affected or moved as we are; offences committed by others against ourselves, and the manner in which we are apt to be affected with them, give a real occasion for calling to mind our own sins against God. Now there is an apprehension and presentiment, natural to mankind, that we ourselves shall one time or other be dealt with as we deal with others; and a peculiar acquiescence in, and feeling of, the equity and justice of this equal distribution. . . . Let any one read our Saviour's parable of the 'king who took account of his servants';† and the equity and rightness of the sentence which was passed upon him who was unmerciful to his fellow-servant, will be felt. There is somewhat in human nature, which accords to and falls in with that method of determination. . . . Could anything raise more dreadful apprehensions of the (final) judgment, than the reflection that you had been without mercy towards those who had offended you? . . . And these natural apprehensions are authorised by our Saviour's application of the parable."‡

"The law of God is the expression of his own moral perfection, and he cannot permit it to be depreciated with impunity. . . . A lower requirement cannot be conceived, without charging God with indifference to his perfection and dereliction of his honour. What does his law demand, but that he should be loved and honoured *proportionably to his merit?*" "A violation of his claims on the entire and devoted obedience of his rational creatures, infinitely superior to those of any earthly benefactor, has a *proportionate* criminality; and on the principles of equal justice, deserves an adequate punishment." "The righteousness of the requirement, and the correspondent equity of its sanction, are shewn forth in their just glory by the obedience unto death of Jesus the Son of God. Put under the law, he hath magnified it and made it honourable, and is become the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."§

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* Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul.* 1792. p. 279. chap. 27.

† Matt. XVIII. ‡ Butler's *Sermons.* p. 112. *Upon Forgiveness of Injuries.*

§ Dr. Pye Smith's Four Discourses on *Sacrifice and Atonement.* 2d. Ed. 1842. pp. 35. 48.

demand of inward purity (borrowed from the Essenes).

It is generally acknowledged that there is little, if anything, strictly original in the morality of Jesus; that nearly the whole of the Gospel precepts are to be found in the Old Testament, the book of Ecclesiasticus, and the most ancient Rabbinical writings:*—the selection of which, indeed, and some alterations and additions, show the independent judgment of Jesus, who also delivered them with greater force, and the authority of a conscious prophet. His original genius and the moral strength of his mind are proved also by his comparative disregard of ceremonies. To be able to say, in contradiction to the ideas of the age, "to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man", and "man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath for man", shows the energy of a master mind, that would make a law for itself; and his vehement denunciations against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, the High established clergy of the land, indicates the fearless integrity of a moral reformer:—still, in all this there is no evidence of superhuman wisdom. The demand for inward purity, which gives the tone of spiritual elevation to his teaching, was peculiar to the school of Essenes, to which it is hardly to be doubted that Jesus originally belonged. Philo says of them (the Essenes) that "they have attained the highest holiness in the worship of God, not by sacrificing animals, but by cultivating purity of heart." But this purity of heart, whose aim and reward is the contemplation of Deity, has the necessary effect of drawing away the thoughts from the supposed contamination of worldly affairs. Jesus did not indeed contemn the natural affections,—though his peculiar object made him cut himself off from all domestic relations, and consequently he who has been represented as set expressly before us as a model in all the affairs of life, never was in a position to display the virtues most essential to the well-being of mankind in general;—but the spirit of asceticism is shown in many of his precepts, inculcating a love of poverty and bodily deprivations, as if they were good for their own sake, and what may be called an excessive heavenly-mindedness, inconsistent with the innocent and really beneficial enjoyment of this life.† The precept "take no thought for the morrow" is not sound doctrine, but an unwholesome exaggeration of true morality, based upon the narrow and false Jewish notion, that the favourite children of God were under the providential care of Heaven, and therefore needed not the merely Gentile virtue of prudence. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth" is an undue contemning of the present world, and based upon a merely selfish motive of refined self-interest. "Rejoice when men persecute you" is worse, for it includes an unbenevolent satisfaction in, or at least indifference to, the guilt of fellow-beings. In general, of the motives assigned for virtue, "great shall be your reward in heaven", is of a selfish nature; and the higher one, to promote the glory

* See *Origin of Christianity*, chap. XVII.

† This ascetic tone is especially conspicuous in Luke.

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"Since no passion God hath endued us with can be in itself evil; and yet since men frequently indulge a passion in such ways and degrees that at length it becomes quite another thing from what it was originally in our nature; and those vices of malice and revenge in particular take their occasion from the natural passion of resentment: it will be needful to trace this up to its original, and when we know what the passion is in itself, and the ends of it, we shall easily see, what are the abuses of it, in which malice and revenge consist; and which are so strongly forbidden." "The precepts to *forgive*, and to *love our enemies*, do not relate to general indignation against injury and the authors of it, but to this feeling, or resentment when raised by private or personal injury." "It is easy to see what is the degree in which we are commanded to love our enemies. It were well if it could as easily be reduced to practice. It cannot be imagined, that we are required to love them with any peculiar kind of affection. But suppose the person injured to have a due natural sense of the injury, and no more; he ought to be affected towards the person in the same way any good men, uninterested in the case, would be; if they had the same just sense, which we have supposed the injured person to have, of the fault: after which there will yet remain real good-will towards the offender."*

"I see every where in Christianity the great design of liberating and raising the human mind. I see nothing narrowing or depressing, nothing of the littleness of the systems which human fear, and craft, and ambition have engendered. I meet there no minute legislation, no descending to precise details, no arbitrary injunctions, no yoke of ceremonies, no outward religion. Every thing breathes freedom, liberality, enlargement. . . . I find it inculcating an enlarged spirit of piety and philanthropy, leaving each of us to manifest this spirit according to the monitions of his individual conscience; calling the soul to freedom and power, by calling it to guard against the senses, the passions, the appetites, through which it is chained, enfeebled, destroyed; aiming to give the mind power over the outward world, to make it superior to events, to suffering, to material nature, to persecution, to death; aiming to give the mind power over itself, to invest it with inward sovereignty, to call forth within us a mighty energy for our own elevation." "Man is glorious and happy, not by what he has, but by what he is. He can receive nothing better or nobler than the unfolding of his own spiritual nature. The highest existence in the universe is Mind; for God is mind; and the development of that principle which assimilates us to God, must be our supreme good. The omnipotent Creator, we have reason to think, can bestow nothing greater than intelligence, love, rectitude, energy of will and of benevolent action; for these are the splendours of his own nature. We adore him for these. In imparting these, he imparts, as it were, himself. We are too apt to look abroad for good.

* Butler's *Sermons*, pp. 93. 102. 108.

of God, is founded on human ideas of Deity, and is much inferior to the love of virtue for its own sake, or for the good done to mankind. (The motive, "that ye may be the children of your Father," is not included in this remark, being one of the purest and highest in the New Testament.) And, notably, there is a pervading tone of falseness given to the morality of Jesus and his apostles, by the grand error under which they lay that the end of the world was at hand, and consequently that it was not worth while to regard the temporal concerns so speedily to vanish away.

XXVII. The Atonement is altogether contrary to natural morality.

When we go on to consider the morality of Christianity as developed in the Epistles, where the atoning sacrifice of Christ begins to be regarded as the only means of reconciliation with God, our natural sense of what is just and right is much more shocked, or rather is altogether confounded:—not, indeed, that the whole tremendous doctrine of human depravity, of election and reprobation, with eternal torments as the meed of the greater portion of the race for Adam's single transgression, and all its logical concatenation of dogmas consistent in their inconsistency with human nature,—not that all these were fully developed in the mind of Paul, though his creative genius laid the germs of them, or rather moulded them out of already formed notions of the efficacy of sacrifice held both by Jews and Heathens.* It is hardly needful to expose the unmoral nature of this doctrine, since its manifest effect is to make its believers undervalue morality. With them necessarily grace is beyond and above works; and the idea, so gross and so perverted, that righteousness can be imputed, is to such a degree opposed to all natural sense of justice, as to make any right perception of true morality impossible so long as it remains a film upon the eye of the mind, a clog upon the action of conscience. If, as has been urged, the idea of forgiveness at all is contrary to nature, much more obviously the doctrine of forgiveness on account of the merits and for the sake of another, is totally at variance with the principle of right implanted within us, and purely theological and artificial. It rests upon the assumption—which seems the result of an impatience for explanation of those deficiencies which the intelligent consciousness of man, as soon as ever it was awakened, made him perceive in himself, in common with the outward world, and which rightly ought only to urge him on to conquer them,—that man is not as God made him, since God must have wished his creature to be perfect at once, as man himself wishes it; that God, like himself, must be displeased, disappointed, with his imperfection,—nay, as crouching superstition whispers, must be *angry* with the poor incompetent creature that he has made: whence, to this undisciplined mode of thinking,

* See Mackay's *Progress of the Intellect, as exemplified in the religious development of the Greeks and Hebrews.* Vol. II.

But the only true good is within. In this outward universe, magnificent as it is, in the bright day and the starry night, in the earth and the skies, we can discover nothing so vast as thought, so strong as the unconquerable purpose of duty, so sublime as the spirit of disinterestedness and self-sacrifice. A mind which withstands all the powers of the outward universe, all the pains which fire and sword and storm can inflict, rather than swerve from uprightness, is nobler than the universe. Why will we not learn the glory of the soul? We are seeking a foreign good. But we all possess within us what is of more worth than the external creation. For this outward system is the product of Mind. All its harmony, beauty, and beneficent influences, are the fruits and manifestations of Thought and Love; and is it not nobler and happier, to be enriched with these energies, from which the universe springs, and to which it owes its magnificence, than to possess the universe itself? It is not what we have, but what we are, which constitutes our glory and felicity. Philosophers teach us, that the mind creates the beauty which it enjoys in nature; and we all know that, when abandoned to evil passions, it can blot out this beauty, and spread over the fairest scenes the gloom of a dungeon. . . . The true friend and Saviour, is not he who acts for us abroad, but who acts within, who sets the soul free, touches the springs of thought and affection, binds us to God, and by assimilating us to the Creator, brings us into harmony with the creation. Thus the end which we have ascribed to Christ, is the most glorious and beneficent which can be accomplished by any power on earth or in heaven."*

XXVII. "It is clearly contrary to all our notions of government, as well as to what is, in fact, the general constitution of nature, to suppose, that doing well for the future should, in all cases, prevent all the judicial bad consequences of having done evil, or all the punishment annexed to disobedience. . And though the efficacy of repentance itself alone, to prevent what mankind had rendered themselves obnoxious to, and recover what they had forfeited, is now insisted upon, in opposition to Christianity; yet by the general prevalence of propitiatory sacrifices over the heathen world, this notion of repentance alone being sufficient to expiate guilt, appears to be contrary to the general sense of mankind. Upon the whole then: had the laws, the general laws of God's government been permitted to operate, without any interposition in our belief, the future punishment, for aught we know to the contrary, or have any reason to think, must inevitably have followed, notwithstanding any thing we could have done to prevent it. Now: In this darkness, or this light of nature, call it which you please, revelation comes in; confirms every doubting fear, which could enter into the heart of man, concerning the future unprevented consequence of wickedness: supposes the world to be in a state of ruin (a supposition which seems the very ground of the

* Channing's Works, pp. 362, 360. *The great purpose of Christianity.*

it seemed the shortest, surest road to the desired perfection,—or rather to the supposed *fruits* of it, an evasion devised by a superstition the counterpart of the former,—that God should effect it by his own easy act of gracious Will; an idea which thence blended itself with the sublime one of Voluntary Self-Sacrifice.

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XXVIII. The character of Christ is not a model for us.

Besides its moral precepts, Christianity is said to offer us a perfect model of human virtue in the character of Christ. But if Christ was a Divine Being, or even merely a specially inspired and providentially attended human being, he is manifestly beyond our power of imitation. If the common Christian view be so far departed from, as to say, that his power and knowledge may both be limited, yet that his *character* is perfect: still, even this supposes him a miraculously gifted being, and therefore above our sphere. Nor in his circumstances any more than in his supposed nature, could he be made a model by ordinary men. As a prophet, as the Messiah, he can be revered, not imitated. Of his private life, where his example would be useful, almost all we know is that he abjured all domestic ties. All we can learn of him gives the conviction that his character was great and good in the highest degree; but this we gather more from the impression he left upon his disciples than from any means of forming our own judgment. In some points the panegyric heaped upon him appears strained and inappropriate, as with regard to his humility and self-devotion. Setting aside the orthodox view, in which he had nothing to do with any human virtue,—and it must be remembered that it was in *this* view that his humility was praised by the apostles, the humility of a superangelic being in condescending to be made flesh:—there was no sign of humility in believing himself to be the chosen One of God, whether it were a true intuition, or a fanatical delusion; neither was it a sacrifice of self in the highest sense, to bear the trials of disappointment, isolation, and personal deprivation, incident to the life of a public reformer, for a few years, and the pangs of crucifixion for a few hours, with the prospect of reigning through the ages of eternity at the right hand of God, the Judge and worshipped Saviour of the world.*

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* See the chapters on the *Character, views, and doctrine of Jesus* in Hennell's *Origin of Christianity*, and on *The moral perfection of Jesus* in Newman's *Phases of Faith*.

—INTERNAL EVIDENCE.]

Christian dispensation, and which, if not provable by reason, yet is in no wise contrary to it); teaches us too, that the rules of the divine government are such, as not to admit of pardon immediately and directly upon repentance, or by the sole efficacy of it: but then teaches at the same time, what nature might justly have hoped, that the moral government of the universe was not so rigid, but that there was room for an interposition, to avert the fatal consequences of vice: which therefore, by this means, does admit of pardon. Revelation teaches us, that the unknown laws of God's more general government, no less than the particular laws by which we experience he governs us at present, are compassionate, as well as good in the more general notion of goodness: and that he hath mercifully provided, that there should be an interposition to prevent the destruction of human kind; whatever that destruction unprevented would have been. 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him',—not, to be sure in a speculative, but in a practical sense,—'should not perish': gave his Son in the same way of goodness to the world, as he affords particular persons the friendly assistance of their fellow creatures: when without it, their temporal ruin would be the certain consequence of their follies: though in a transcendent and infinitely higher degree. And the Son of God loved us... and interposed in such a manner as was necessary and effectual to prevent that execution of justice upon sinners, which God had appointed should otherwise have been executed upon them: or in such a manner, as to prevent that punishment from actually following, which, according to the general laws of divine government, must have followed the sins of the world, had it not been for such interposition."*

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XXVIII. "Jesus Christ has 'declared' God to Man, not as a prophet merely, but as (what Paul calls him in the Epistle to the Colossians) 'the Image of the invisible God;"—not merely by announcing the divine will, but by manifesting, as far as our feeble capacities will permit, the divine glory, and shadowing forth the attributes of the invisible and unsearchable God. And this for two purposes most important to mankind; 1st, by a softened and endearing, as well as impressive manifestation of the Deity, to aid and exalt our piety, engaging our affections in the cause of religion; and 2dly, by a bright example of superhuman virtue, seconded by the promise of spiritual aid, to instruct and encourage us in our duty—to illuminate and direct our Christian course—to purify and to elevate our nature. The one purpose, in short, may be said to have been, to bring down God to Man; the other, to lift up Man towards God." "Many, it is true, of the qualities which our Lord displayed, such as his patience under provocation, and fortitude against pain and danger, are such as can belong to Him in his human nature alone, and can present us but a very faint shadow of the attributes of God, considered as such; but still these are attributes of one and the

* Butler's *Analogy*. Part II. chap. v. sec. IV. v. p. 214.

XXIX.

Christianity is a revelation of immortality only to rude minds.

It is also alleged as a main object of the Christian revelation to bring life and immortality to light, and to proclaim a future righteous retribution. It must be repeated that the evidence on behalf of the resurrection of Christ, (which is the grand sanction and confirmation offered by Christianity to a doctrine, be it remembered, already firmly believed by the Pharisaic Jews, before the appearance of Christ,) is so unsatisfactory when faithfully examined, as to lead enlightened men in general to fall back upon the natural proofs of immortality as after all the strongest and most reliable: and this is not only for the critical doubts respecting it, but also on such grounds as, that—the resurrection of Christ as a divinely-appointed, or much more as a divine being, is no proof of ours;—his rising again with the same mortal body, whereas we know that ours are dispersed to atoms, makes his resurrection of a quite different kind from what ours must be;—and the fact of its being a special miracle that was required to raise Jesus, tends to show that in the natural order of things as laid down for ordinary men there would be no resurrection at all. Therefore the Jewish notions perpetuated in the apostolic narrative, in fact weaken the belief in immortality to thoughtful men of the present age. It is only upon minds of a ruder stamp, which *feel* rather than *think*, that the strong energetic belief of the apostles acts with sympathetic force, and by its own vehement assurance makes them believe too. Hence,—and it is important to note this moral effect of the doctrine,—the belief in a future life has acquired an overbalanced character from the reports of the resurrection of Christ: it has attained an influence greater than it would have had in reason, and therefore an unsound, exaggerated, and unwholesome influence. Being an unnatural belief,—that is, at all events, unnatural in this degree of positive assurance,—it has a perverting effect, leading in some to hypocrisy and a pretence of regard to a world to come, while all the real interest is in the present; and in others, where it is genuine, to all sorts of superstitious notions, and practically to a too small estimate of the duties as well as the enjoyments of this life.

The idea of a *Day of Judgment*, gross and material as it is, has led in an untold variety of ways to the neglect of justice here below in the dealings of Christians with their fellow men. And for the accompanying doctrine of the eternity of hell-torments, which if not strictly expressed in Scripture, has been derived from it, it is so manifestly horrible as to need no exposure. It is one of those monstrosities which betray the proper nature of superstition, and have no existence apart from it. It shows that the Jewish savageness of disposition was not all softened away by Christian benevolence; that love for the brethren was not yet enlarged into a love for mankind.——The equal admission of Gentiles with Jews to the benefits of the Christian salvation, chiefly attributable to Paul, was, indeed, a great advance upon the previous Jewish exclusive-

same *Person*, in whom we believe the Divine and Human Nature to have been united; though we can no more comprehend that union, than we can that of the human soul and body; and they are well fitted to fix our affections on that Person."*

XXIX. "The belief of a life to come, though nominally professed, cannot be considered as practically forming any part of the creed of those ancient nations with whom we are best acquainted. . . The Epicurean school openly contended against it; Aristotle passes it by as not worth considering, and takes for granted the contrary supposition, as not needing proof. . . Of those philosophers who contended for a future state, it is to be observed, not only that, as Dr. Paley remarks, they did not properly speaking, effect a *discovery*; 'it was only one guess among many; he only discovers, who proves;' but also that their argument did not fully succeed in convincing even themselves. Those which at one time they bring forward as decisive proof, they seem at another time to regard as hardly possessing that degree of probability, which, now that the doctrine is established, most are ready to allow to them. Cicero especially we find distinctly acknowledging, at least in the person of one of his disputants, that though, while he is reading the Phædo, he feels disposed to assent to the reasons urged in favour of a future state, his conviction vanishes as soon as he lays down the book, and revolves the matter in his own thoughts; which was the feeling probably with which the author himself had written it. Many indeed of the deistical writers of modern times have come to much more decisive conclusions on this, and also on many other points than the ancients did, and indeed than are fairly warranted by any arguments which unassisted reason can supply; but this only affords a presumption of the powerful, though unacknowledged and perhaps unperceived, influence which the Gospel revelation has exercised even on the minds of those who reject it: they have drunk at that stream of knowledge, which they cannot, or will not, trace to the real source from which it flows." Ancient philosophers and modern deists argue from the distinct nature of the soul: but "the question is left by unaided Reason in a doubtful state. To the Christian, indeed, all this doubt would be instantly removed, if he found that the immortality of the soul, as a disembodied Spirit, were revealed to him in the word of God. He cannot question the power of the great Creator to prolong, in any way He may see fit, the life He originally gave; but this is very different from arriving at the conclusion by the evidence which unassisted reason can supply. In fact, however, no such doctrine *is* revealed to us; the Christian's hope, as founded on the promises contained in the Gospel, is, the resurrection of the *body*; a doctrine which seems never to have occurred (nor indeed was likely to occur, from any con-

* Whately's *Essays*. Essay II. sec. VI. IV.

ness; but it leaves much yet to be cleared away in the view of philosophic philanthropy, since it never supposed that they could be saved without the theological condition of faith in Christ.

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XXX.

Christianity was fitted for its own age, not for all ages:

Christianity, then, does not intrinsically show itself to be a Divine, *i.e.* a perfect institution. In its doctrines, its miracles, and its morality, it bears the stamp of the age in which it arose, the signs of human origin and human imperfection. It grew in a natural way out of what went before it, and was a noble expression of the best wisdom the world then possessed:—so well adapted to the existing need that it was accepted as Divine. But by this superstition, which binds truth and error in one, the mistakes that belonged to the past are perpetuated to our own time, when from their now manifest incongruity they are become incomparably more prejudicial. Thus, to recapitulate:

in its doctrines;

The apostolic announcement that Jesus was the Messiah, the Word, the Lamb of God who should take away the sins of the world, was but an application to their master of existing notions of Hebrew patriotic anticipation and of ideal Grecian philosophy;—notions which would have had their day and given place to new forms of thought, if they had not been so embodied. The doctrine that "without shedding of blood is no remission of sins," was already in the world Jewish and Heathen, having been handed down from the most savage times, when God was conceived as a savage too, jealous and relentless as his worshippers themselves; and the Pauline theology, which adapted the doctrine on a grand spiritual scale to the "offering up once for all of the body of Jesus Christ," while it has captivated the dazzled imagination of Christians through all these ages, and held faith fast in the bonds of bewilderment, has only shown it all the more conspicuously in its real monstrosity, as soon as it is considered in the unprejudiced light of reason and morality.

Respecting the nature of God, Christianity reveals nothing,—*could* indeed reveal nothing, since we have not faculties to comprehend it. It accepts the Hebrew idea of God as it stood at the time, deepening only its amiable characteristics, as a protecting guardian and loving Father, but having especially favour for his elect children: an idea which to the present mode of thought, is anthropomorphic and not accordant with justice. If we are to make original Christianity responsible for the dogma which sprung out of it, (by logical necessity, as it appears,) of the mysterious Trinity, the divided-undivided Three-in-One, at which "reason stands aghast,"—this is certainly no *revelation;* the mystery remains a mystery for ever, unrevealed and unrevealable;—and we must bring against Christianity the heavy accusation of compelling us to receive—

templation of the change from night to day, and from summer to winter) to any of the heathen." "The notion that immortal happiness after death is the just and natural consequence of a well spent life, is equally unfounded in reason and in revelation... Immortal happiness not only can be no other than a free gift, but a gift which can be reasonably expected on no other ground than that of express *promise*. Such a promise is held out in the Gospel; in which the Christian finds eternal life alluded to, not as merely 'brought to light' by Jesus Christ, but *procured* through his means... The Christian Scriptures do not profess to republish, as part of the religion of nature, the doctrine that eternal happiness is the just and legitimate reward of a virtuous life; but, on the contrary, while they speak of death as the '*wages of sin*,' they represent eternal life as 'the *gift* of God through Jesus Christ': a reward, indeed, dependent on obedience, but earned and merited by the sacrifice of a Redeemer."*

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XXX. "Christianity stands distinguished from all systems of religion, or of philosophy, which unaided reason can devise, by the motives to which it appeals... For a rational and firm assurance of a future resurrection to immortality, we must resort to the Gospel;—for the hopes of eternal happiness, we must look to Him, who has not only announced but purchased it;—for such a manifestation of the Godhead as may excite us to affectionate Piety; and for such a model of human Virtue as may be securely imitated—we shall vainly seek, except in the Gospel; and it is there also, and there alone, that we find morality inculcated, not only on the ground of those promises and threatenings which it sets before us, but also of the affections which it is so remarkably and peculiarly calculated to excite. If mere external acts of duty were all that is required, this kind of precept would still be far superior to a mere appeal to men's reason, and would produce a larger amount of good conduct: much greater, then, will its superiority appear, when we consider how much nobler and more intrinsically valuable is that good conduct which springs from a pious, and grateful, and affectionate heart. Let no one, then, lose sight of, or undervalue, these admirable, these divine peculiarities of our religion, which furnish the only effectual means of counteracting the weakness of man's nature. Let no one, under pretence of laying a firm foundation of Natural Religion, render the superstructure of Christianity insignificant, by attributing to natural religion what Revelation alone can furnish: and, above all, let us not,—carelessly blind to those splendid characteristics which distinguish it—confound this religion with the various systems of philosophical speculation, or of popular superstition, which have successively occupied mankind; but keep our

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* Whately's *Essays*, pp. 50. 52. 53. 54. 60. 100. 110. *Revelation of a future state.*

that is, to *pretend* to receive—a faith which revolts and crushes our intellectual powers, and makes us false to ourselves, and only mental slaves towards God.

The doctrine of a future life was already established and firmly believed when Christianity offered to it as a corroboration the fact of the actual bodily resurrection of Jesus, and by its legends of tangible presentations after death, such as are natural to a superstitious populace in all ages, gave it a gross material form which has adhered to it till now. And the apostolic idea of the future life was that it was to come in their own time. It was really to occur to themselves to witness that "the heavens should pass away with a great noise, and the elements should melt with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein should be burned up," and that then "the Lord should descend on the clouds and catch up them, his elect, in the air." The fine rhapsody of the book of Revelations* shows the state of inflamed fanaticism, burning, earnest, genuine, to which the early Christians had been stimulated; and the impression of this fiery, morbid enthusiasm remains on the cooled and hardened lava of the extinct volcano which is the substratum of our accommodated faith. Their passionate longing for the New Jerusalem that was to descend for them "adorned as a bride," is represented as a fit state of mind to be copied by Christians of the present day, who need a severe effort of abstraction from engrossing worldly interests, to enable them in any way to realize the belief in an actual future existence:—thus, again, opening an abundant source of hypocrisy and all kinds of superstition.

in its miracles;

In the miracles by which it professes to be attested, Christianity is marked by the deficiency of the age in respect to natural science, including the science of human nature: and in making it an imperative demand of religion that we should accept the same explanations of remarkable phenomena as those which satisfied Jewish peasants 1800 years ago, (as, for instance, that epileptic fits were caused by the possession of devils,) it forces us to repudiate our actual knowledge; or else to make out some evasive double meaning in plain words.

and its morality.

In morality it is the same. The principles of the Essenes were excellent in proportion to the then state of mankind; but are no longer the best that can be laid down for us: the rules of duty, like all others, must grow with our growth, or they will no longer fit our requirements. As our whole nature expands,—and who would be so sceptical as to deny that in 18 centuries it has expanded?—our obligations, and our insight into the character of those obli-

* The genuine antiquity of this suggestive illustration of the spirit of the times, is strongly confirmed by modern criticism. Baur admits it as one of the six books of the New Testament which only he allows to be genuine, or even products at all of apostolic times,—the others being, the basis of Matthew, Galatians, Corinthians, and Romans. See *Westminster Review*, January, 1854. p. 244.

eye steadfastly fixed, as it were, on the Star which stands over the holy Infant at Bethlehem, and which has no fellow in the firmament."*

"From Adam until Christ, the religious knowledge of the world was like the gradual dawning of light which precedes the sunrise, and from which we infer the existence and anticipate the approach of the sun itself. Christ came; but his coming was as when the sun has risen in mist and cloud, and can scarcely be discerned. And then came the Holy Spirit, like the breath of heaven which blows aside the cloud, and enables us to look upon the source of all the daylight with which we have been blessed. So, also, our present condition as a Church may have some latent connexion with futurity, which we shall then only be qualified to perceive, when God shall again manifest Himself, and we 'see Him even as He is.'"† "The Apostles themselves, perhaps, saw not the full operation and progressive results of their own plans; and we, at this moment, may be cherishing among the rites and ordinances of Christianity some, the full effect of which it may be reserved to future times,—to a period beyond this world,—to develop. It is impossible to say, how far we are living by faith and not by sight."‡

"Pretended revelations not only abound with matters of speculative curiosity, unconnected with practice, but are sometimes even principally made up of them, so as to appear to have for their chief object the communication of knowledge concerning heavenly things, and for its own sake. . . Our religion teaches us what is needful for us to know, but little or nothing besides; the information it imparts is such as concerns the regulation of our character and practice, but leaves our curiosity unsatisfied. . . If our faith be sufficiently tried by the admission of such mysterious doctrines as are important for other practical ends also—then, the revelation of any further mysteries, which lead to no such practical end, is the less necessary, and consequently the less to be expected. . Some parts of revelation may have a practical importance relative to some particular times, persons, and circumstances, but not to all. . There are some things, I am well aware, revealed in the Gospel, which but too many, even of those who assent to them, are inclined to consider as mere speculative articles of faith; as e. g. the revelation of God to us, not merely as our Creator and Governor, but also as our incarnate Redeemer, and as the Holy Ghost our Sanctifier. But we may safely affirm, that whoever does not perceive in these doctrines any practical tendency, has not yet gained a just and adequate notion of what the Christian religion is. . . As the doctrine of the Trinity may be considered as containing a summary and compendium of the Christian Faith, so, its application may be regarded as a summary of Christian practice: as we believe God to stand in three relations to *us*, we also must practically keep in view the three *corres-*

* Whately's Essays. p. 225-7. *Love towards Christ as a motive.*

† Hinds's *History of the Rise and Progress of Christianity.* Vol. I. p. 148.

‡ *Ibid.* Vol. II. p. 120. Quoted in Whately's Essays, p. 248.

gations, expand also. To bind down to a fixed law in morals, as well as in science, and in religion also, is to forbid all progress, and check the tide of improvement with the arbitrary fiat, hitherto shalt thou come and no further. The aim of the Essenes at purity, proceeded from the oriental assumption of the evil nature of matter;—the body must be subjected, annihilated, that the spirit may be freed and enjoy its own perfection, which is a state of pure contemplation and inanition. The good sense of Jesus and his apostles kept the doctrine from becoming extravagant in their own time; but whenever the sanction of religion is given to error, superstition necessarily follows, and the abuses of monkish asceticism were the *legitimate* consequences of the gospel precepts. In our day the consequences are deplorable in another direction: nature has forced the abrogation of those faithful austerities, and modern Christians, (save a few genuine copiers of the saints, who are stigmatized as fanatics,) while professing to take the gospels as their rule of life, satisfy themselves that the commands to "love not the world" belonged only to the early disciples, and that they themselves may look for a heavenly reward on much easier conditions. A false pretence of really unattainable sanctity, is the miserable result of accepting as divine an unnatural rule of duty.*

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XXXI. It is responsible for Judaism.

In estimating the character of Christianity, and the claim set up for it of Divine wisdom, it is not to be forgotten that standing as it does upon the basis of Judaism, it becomes tacitly responsible for the divinity of that first institution as well as its own. Jesus indeed claimed authority to mitigate some of the ceremonial requirements of the law of Moses, and Paul declared that its end and consummation was arrived; but neither implied a doubt that it had been ordained by God. Thus all the contradictions of geology and astronomy, all the gross physical miracles, all the savage delineations of Deity in the Old Testament, are bound up in the creed which must be believed by the Christian.—Those who say that Judaism was merely a temporary institution, are taking the ground of Infidelity, and at once give up the claim of its being a Revelation: unless, indeed, they believe that God can trifle with his creatures.

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* See Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*, translated by Marian Evans. Chapman's Quarterly Series, No. VI. 1854. p. 208.

*ponding relations* in which, as is plainly implied by that doctrine, we stand *towards* Him; as 1st, the creatures and 'children of God;' 2nd, as the 'redeemed and purchased people' of Jesus Christ; and 3d, as 'the temple of the Holy Ghost' our Sanctifier." "Let no one seek for a system of Astronomy, or of Geology, or of any other branch of Physical Science, in the Scriptures; which were designed to teach men, not Natural Philosophy, but Religion: nor let them be forced into the service of any particular theory on those subjects; nor, again, complained of, for not furnishing sufficient information on such points. Nor let any jealous fears be cherished, lest the pursuits of science should interfere with revelation."* "It must not be forgotten that the Bible is independent of all science; nay, did not its science reflect the science of the several ages through which it passed during the long period of its birth, it would have lacked one of the chief tokens and proofs of its authenticity, as well as one of the highest claims on our acceptance and our respect."†

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XXXI. "Many persons are struck with the air of *puerility* in a great part of the precepts of the Mosaic Law, from its supposed unsuitableness to the dignity of a Divine Lawgiver. In a future and higher state of existence, we may probably perceive nearly the same, in all the instructions, natural or supernatural, ever given to Man in his highest state of civilization: and the difference between the rudest and most advanced conditions of our Species (when once removed from the condition of mere savages) may then appear to us hardly worth notice. The distinction between the ancient Israelites and the most enlightened Christians, may perhaps hereafter appear to us analogous to that between children of four or five years old, and those of eight or nine."‡ "To look for a complete revelation of Gospel truth in every book of the Old Testament, is as if a series of letters from a father to his son, from his childhood to his mature age, were blended together, and it were contended, as necessary to indicate the consistency of the writer, that all should contain the very same instructions."§

"When the Jews came out of Egypt, they were plainly a barbarous and ferocious people—pagan in all their sympathies and habits—rude, savage, and sensual in their tastes. They were a fair specimen of human nature in its animal type—and as such it was necessary to deal with them... Somehow or other, it is certain, spiritualism, starting at the very lowest conceivable point among this people, made steady progress—cleared itself gradually of the grosser forms with which it was first associated—and ultimately brought up the level of human kind to an average of religious conviction and sentiment which rendered possible the presentation

* Whately's *Essays*, pp. 233. 241. 248. 252. 254. 262.

† Dr. Beard, in the *Christian Reformer*. September, 1854.

‡ Whately's *Essays*, p. 290. § *Ibid*, p. 96.

XXXII.

**The true worth of Christianity is not known till it is recognized as natural.**

If we regard Christianity as a natural production, *i.e.*, as a development of Judaism, assisted by broader views from Gentile philosophy, and animated by a more generous spirit of wider philanthropy,—and suffer it to take its proper place in history: at once we are free to appreciate its real merits, and can much the better recognize its good for not being obliged to blind our judgments in the fear lest they should discover its evil. We can admire the benign influence which, just when it was wanted, came to counteract the fierce animal passions that had hitherto held undisputed sway (with regard to the masses) over the superior spiritual instincts struggling to obtain their freedom,—all the more for not conceiving ourselves bound, because the Lord has said it, to "resist no evil", to offer our cheek to the smiter, and our garment to the spoiler. Acknowledging to ourselves without reserve, that we shall exercise our own judgment upon the propriety of our observance of the old precepts, we can much better see and honour the good that is in them. So also our reverence for the leaders of the great Reform, as far as they can be distinguished by us, if less exaggerated, would seem of a more genuine kind when we regard them simply as faithfully working out the problem of their Present, and ministering to its immediate need with all their powers, which if beyond their age, were not so much beyond as that their age could not profit by them, than if we suppose them to be laying down laws for all future generations. When we try to make that which fitted their age, satisfy ours also, the effort it costs us to strain a forced meaning out of them, or to force a meaning of our own into them, causes a frame of mind very different from the implicit confidence of the true disciple; and far inferior too to the frank admiration of one who can estimate the value of truth from having sought it for himself. The Scripture records will be all the more interesting and valuable to us when we seek in them for genuine human information. Not a particle of the truth that is in them can ever be lost. The great amount of the intrinsic worth that is in them, in Christianity, has been shown by the hold it has had over the minds of men during so many ages. And still there are very many for whom it is yet adapted, who therefore cling to it with steadfast attachment,—for whom it is yet divine. But when bit by bit they unwillingly find that parts are manifestly full of human error, then the great evil comes into play, that superstition has placed the stamp of divinity on the whole alike, so that to spare a part, all sorts of deceitful devices of crooked ingenuity must be used. There is perhaps an inner truth, not appreciable by all, in all doctrines that have ever captivated the human mind. Thus especially in the dogmas of the Incarnation and Atonement, there is something which corresponds with the natural instincts in so profound a manner, that many feel disposed for the sake of this vibrating chord of sentiment, to retain verbally all the associated circumstances in

of divine truth, by Jesus Christ, in the most spiritual form which our nature can apprehend, realize, and enjoy."*

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XXXII. "Lastly, assuming the facts to contain a divine revelation, that interpretation of their spiritual meaning which is found to be congruous with our religious consciousness may complete our conviction that we are rightly instructed in the mind of God. This congruity is, to a great extent, the ultimate basis of very much, if not most, of the actual belief existing in the Christian world. Theories of divine inspiration may be true or not—may be treated as the foundations upon which the authority of God's Word reposes, or as human inventions to secure integrity of doctrine—may be overrated on the one hand, and undervalued on the other—but after all, the steadiest, the surest, the most operative belief in Christianity, is that which is born of the conviction that it answers to our need. There are countless thousands of men who know nothing whatever, and are never likely to know anything, of the incessant controversies waged upon this delicate question, who, nevertheless, rely with unfaltering confidence upon the testimony of the witness within themselves that the gospel, as expounded by the apostles, is an elevating, purifying, gladdening, spiritualizing power. They feel that it has succeeded in quickening in their bosoms a new and more glorious life—that it has set before them a nobler end of living—that it has brought them under the power of a better dominant motive—that it has infused into them a vigour for self-government such as they have derived from no other source—that it has hushed their consciences to peace—that it has changed the entire character of their views of God—that it has intertwined their strongest affections with imperishable objects—that it has filled, even to overflowing, a sensible void in their being—that it has superinduced a willing resignation to all providential arrangements, however hard to bear—that it has overcome in them the fear of death, and endowed them with 'a hope full of immortality.' With this experience in view, you might as well tell them that God made not the sun nor the eye that sees it, the earth nor the senses to which it ministers enjoyment, as to question with them whether the truths they have found so adapted to their spiritual wants are essentially divine. They wait for no settlement of theological conflicts touching the mode in which Scripture was given, to enable them to recognize the authority of revelation. Its title to reign over them is found in its power to do so. All the religious instincts of their nature determine for them the sufficiency of the New Testament display of God in Christ to answer their demands. And, in truth, the basis of their faith is trustworthy—more trustworthy, perhaps, than any theological dogma, how correct soever, respecting the inspiration of Scrip-

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* *Bases of Belief*, pp. 401. 406.

the Christian creed which otherwise revolt them.* How much better would they work out the divine truth for themselves, if at once they held themselves unshackled by all extraneous superstition! The real glory of Christianity should be felt to be that it can lead the mind on to something better than itself. Only when it is thus recognized, is it seen to be really an everlasting good to man. Regarded as imposed by Divine decree, fixed, unchangeable, unimprovable, it is a barrier to all human progress, a chain to bind down the living soul of the Present to the dead body of the Past.

## AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION THAT IT IS DEFICIENT IN TESTIMONY FROM

XXXIII.

It made no peculiar impression upon the world at the time.

That "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation" is a beautiful truth as applied to the growth of moral and religious principles; but that a miraculous interposition in the affairs of men by the personal descent of a Divine Being, should yet not make itself clearly obvious and distinguishable from all the rest of history, is irreconcilable with our experience of what is proper to human nature. Jesus is represented as saying, "if these should hold their peace, the very stones would cry out:"—a very natural thought to the early disciples. If it be said, God's ways are not like ours, this is in fact acknowledging that the idea of miracle is but a fiction of human invention, and that the quiet even course is the truly divine. The little that is said of Christianity during the first century or two shows, that the sensation it produced and the progress it made were no greater than was to be expected from a religion that had a human origin and human means of propagation.

The tampering with ancient manuscripts of which the partizans of Christianity, animated by more piety than honesty, have been notoriously guilty,—especially in the dark days when the monks held the literature of the past almost in their sole keeping,—renders suspicious much of the little mention we have of Christ and his first followers in Jewish and Heathen writers. The undisputed passages, however, from Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny, may be held sufficient of themselves to substantiate

* "I turn away from the Bible, not knowing, if it use our words in a sense so different, so utterly different, from any which we attach to them, what may not be the mystical meaning of any or every verse and fragment of it. It has but employed the words which men use to mock and deceive them. A revelation! Oh, no! no revelation; only rendering the hard life-enigma tenfold harder. . I do not disbelieve that in some mysterious transcendental sense, as involved in the system of the entire universe, with so vast an arc that no faculty of man can apprehend its curve,—that in some such sense the Catholic doctrine of the atonement may be true. But a doctrine out of which, with our reason, our feeling, our logic, I at least can gather any practical instruction for mankind—any deeper appreciation of the attributes of God, any deeper love for Him, any stimulant towards our own obedience—such a doctrine I cannot find it. I bury what I am to think of it in the deepest corner of my own heart, where myself I fear to look." *Nemesis of Faith*, by J. A. Froude, 1849, p. 72.

ture. The latter may be made the substratum of not a few erroneous convictions. The former seldom underlies any serious weight of error. . Men are misled easily enough by sophistry, by assumption, by ecclesiastical authority—but seldom by the testimony of their religious consciousness that it has found a suitable object. 'He that *doeth* the will of my Father, shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or not.' Yes! practical experience is a safer instructor in this school than theoretic certainty. As touching theological science, it may often be wrong—but as touching religious truth, it is for the most part right."*

AS TO ITS POSITION IN HISTORY:

JEWISH AND HEATHEN HISTORIANS.

XXXIII. That a new religion, unsupported by any temporal power, should steadfastly make its own way, in spite of the hostile prejudices of Jews and the scoffs of Gentiles, is sufficient proof of its Divinity.

"Josephus, who wrote his Antiquities about 60 years after the commencement of Christianity, in a passage generally admitted as genuine, mentions John the Baptist, as a preacher of virtue, who baptized his proselytes, was well received by the people, and imprisoned and put to death by Herod.† In another passage, allowed by many, though not without considerable question being moved about it, we hear of 'James, the brother of him who was called Jesus,' and of his being put to death.‡ In a third passage, extant in every copy that remains of Josephus's history, but the authenticity of which has nevertheless been long disputed, we have an explicit testimony to the substance of our history in these words: 'At that time lived Jesus, a wise man, if he may be called a man, for he performed many wonderful works. He was a teacher of such men as received the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him many Jews and Gentiles. This was the Christ; and when Pilate, at the instigation of the chief men among us, had condemned him to the cross, they, who before had conceived an affection for him, did not cease to adhere to him; for on the third day he appeared to them alive again, the divine prophets having foretold these and many wonderful things concerning him. And the sect of the Christians, so called from him, subsists to this time.'§ Whatever become of the controversy concerning the genuineness of this passage . . . still what we asserted is true, that he gives no other or different history of the subject from ours. And I think also that it may with great reason be contended, either that the passage is genuine, or that the silence of Josephus was *designed*. For, when Tacitus, who wrote not 20, perhaps not 10 years after Josephus, tells us, that a vast multitude of Christians were condemned at Rome;

* *Bases of Belief*, pp. 366-8.
† *Antiq.* XVIII. V. 1. 2. ‡ *Ibid*, XX. IX. 1. § *Ibid*, XVIII. III. 3.

the simple facts that Jesus called Christ was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and that his adherents were so zealous in their attachment to the religion he had established, as to undergo the most cruel persecution rather than relinquish it: but the same testimony shows also the slight estimation in which the new religion was held. Converts to it were gained from the lowest of the populace. Philosophers passed it by, as unworthy any deep attention; and though this is partly to their own discredit, and that of the corrupt age to which they belonged, it tells also in a measure against the divine power of the "word" said to be "inspired."

The absence of testimony from Josephus and Philo has been most unsatisfactorily explained. The isolated passage* in the works of the former relating to Christ, can scarcely be doubted to be the insertion of some zealous Christian. The omission of any mention of the Christians (except this very equivocal one) by an author who has given so full an account of cotemporary events, is most probably explained by supposing that, in fact, the Christians were included in his mind under the sect of Essenes;† —showing that they were indeed regarded with respect by the philosophic Jew, but that their miraculous pretensions were classed by him as of no more value than those of many other sects of the day.

## AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION

### THAT THE FACTS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN HISTORY

XXXIV.

**Historical circumstances indicate a political, as well as a religious movement on the part of Jesus;**

But the advocates of Revelation have a right to demand: if we are not to accept the account of the origin of Christianity as it is given in its own records, what then are we to believe of it? whence came the impulse that has carried down the religious scheme of a few Galilean peasants through eighteen centuries and diffused it over all the civilized world? It ought to be shown, and may be shown, though necessarily it must be in a great measure conjecturally, how Christianity may probably have arisen, without any miraculous aid.

All the evangelists agree that the accusation on which Jesus was put to death was that he claimed to be King of the Jews: keeping this fact in view, without regard to the spiritual interpretation put upon the claim thirty years afterwards, the history of the time as given by Josephus affords a simple explanation of his career.‡

It is well known that before the time of Christ the Jews were in constant expectation of the appearance of a mighty prince, promised by their prophets, who should establish his dominion over the whole earth, and introduce the Kingdom of Heaven. As they suffered more and more under

* *Antiquities*, XVIII. III. 3. † See *Origin of Christianity*, p. 63, note.

‡ The following is abridged from the *Historical Sketch from the Babylonish captivity to the end of the first century*, in the two first chapters of Hennell's work.

THEN TESTIMONY.]

that they derived their denomination from Christ, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death, as a criminal, by the procurator Pontius Pilate; that the superstition had spread not only over Judea, the source of the evil, but had reached Rome also:—when Suetonius, an historian cotemporary with Tacitus, relates, that, in the time of Claudius, the Jews were making disturbances at Rome, Chrestus being their leader; and that, during the reign of Nero, the Christians were punished; under both which emperors Josephus lived:—when Pliny, who wrote his celebrated epistle not more than 30 years after the publication of Josephus's history, found the Christians in such numbers in the province of Bithynia as to draw from him a complaint, that the contagion had seized cities, towns, and villages, so as to produce a general desertion of the public rites; and when there is no reason for supposing that the Christians were more numerous in Bithynia than in many other parts of the Roman empire: it cannot, I should suppose, after this, be believed, that the religion, and the transaction upon which it was founded, were too obscure to engage the attention of Josephus, or to obtain a place in his history. Perhaps he did not know how to represent the business, and disposed of his difficulties by passing it over in silence."*

AS TO ITS POSITION IN HISTORY:

CAN BE ACCOUNTED FOR IN A NATURAL WAY.

XXXIV. "The hatred which burned in the breast of the Jew towards his Roman oppressor, perhaps never glowed with equal intenseness in any other conquered state. He had, however, his secret consolation. The long promised king and deliverer was near, and was coming to wear the crown of universal empire. To this conqueror the Jews indeed ascribed the office of promoting religion; but the religion of Moses, corrupted into an outward service, was to them the perfection of human nature. It lay at the foundation of their hopes of dominion. I believe no strength of prejudice ever equalled the intense attachment of the Jew to his peculiar national religion... Among this singular people, burning with impatient expectation, appeared Jesus of Nazareth. His first words were, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' These words we hear with little emotion; but to the Jews, who had been watching for this kingdom for ages, and who were looking for its immediate manifestation, they must have been awakening as an earthquake. Accordingly we find Jesus thronged by multitudes which no building could contain. He repairs to a mountain, as affording him advantages for addressing the crowd. I see them surrounding him with eager looks, and ready to drink in every word from his lips. And what do I hear? Not one word of Judea, of Rome, of freedom, of conquest, of the glories of God's chosen people, and of the thronging of all nations to the temple on

* Paley's *Evidences*. Part I. ch. VII.

the encroaching power of the Romans, the idea of deliverance from their oppression became more urgently associated with this national hope. Repeated insurrections were excited by religious or political enthusiasts, who easily stimulated the populace to believe in their claim to fulfil the prophetic promise; the most remarkable of which was that of Judas the Galilean, or Gaulonite, who persuaded the Galileans to resist an extraordinary taxation imposed by Cyrenius, the Roman Governor of Syria. This man appears to have been of great talent, and to have left a deep impression on the minds of his countrymen; for he is spoken of as being not only the leading revolter against the Romans, but as the head of a fourth philosophic sect. After describing the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes,* Josephus goes on to speak of a "system of philosophy which we were before unacquainted withal," originated by Judas, whose followers "agree in all other things with the Pharasaic notions; but they have an inviolable attachment to liberty, and say that God is to be their only Ruler and Lord". The revolt of Judas occurred about A.D. 8, and after its failure, no important armed resistance was attempted against the Romans for 25 years; but he had left a strong impression, especially amongst the hardy Galileans. These feelings found a partial vent in the anticipation of the miraculous deliverance promised by the prophets. It was time that "Elias should come", as announced by Malachi (IV. 5, 6). An enthusiast of the Essene sect, named John, clad in camel's hair and leathern girdle like Elijah (II. Kings I. 8), appeared in the desert near Jordan, calling on the people to repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. The laudatory tones with which Josephus speaks of him as a preacher of virtue furnish a strong presumption that his discourses contained at least no apparent incentive to insurrection (for Josephus was attached to the Roman interest). Much excitement, however, was raised. Crowds came to hear him, and to give the outward sign of inward purification, submission to baptism ("partaking of the waters of purification" being an initiatory rite with the Essenes†). Amongst these crowds was a Galilean named Jesus, the son of Joseph, a carpenter of Nazareth.

But this was no mere disciple of John. The preacher in the wilderness soon found that his influence must decrease, while a more powerful voice than his own was raising the multitudes in Galilee with the same summons to "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand"; and before his course was violently extinguished he sent a message to Jesus, asking if he were indeed the One that should come,—to which an evasive reply was returned. Jesus was a teacher of the Essene morality; not however without admirable additions of his own; but he adhered not to its ceremonial restrictions. He went about amongst the people, bidding them, "follow him"; and he proceeded to lay the foundation of a separate organized society by selecting twelve of his countrymen to be his

* *Antiq.* XVIII. I. also *War*, II. VII. † *War*, II. 8, 6.

Mount Zion. Almost every word was a death-blow to the hopes and feelings, which glowed through the whole people, and were consecrated under the name of religion. He speaks of the long-expected Kingdom of Heaven; but speaks of it as a felicity promised to, and only to be partaken by, the humble and pure in heart. The righteousness of the Pharisees, that which was deemed the perfection of religion, and which the new deliverer was expected to spread far and wide, he pronounces worthless, and declares the kingdom of Heaven, or of the Messiah, to be shut against all who do not cultivate a new, spiritual, and disinterested virtue. Instead of war and victory, he commands his impatient hearers to love, to forgive, to bless their enemies; and holds forth this spirit of benignity, mercy, peace, as the special badge of the people of the true Messiah. Instead of national interests and glories, he commands them to seek first a spirit of impartial charity and love, unconfined by the bounds of tribe or nation, and proclaims this to be the happiness and honour of the reign for which they hoped. Instead of this world's riches, which they expected to flow from all lands into their own, he commands them to lay up treasures in heaven, and directs them to an incorruptible, immortal life, as the true end of their being. Nor is this all. He does not merely offer himself as a spiritual deliverer, as the founder of a new empire of inward piety and universal charity; he closes with language announcing a more mysterious office. 'Many will say unto me in that day Lord, Lord, .. and then I will profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.' Here I meet the annunciation of a character as august as it must have been startling. I hear him foretelling a dominion to be exercised in the future world. He begins to announce, what entered largely into his future teaching, that his power was not bounded to this earth. These words I better understand, when I hear him subsequently declaring, that, after a painful death, he was to rise again and ascend to heaven, and there, in a state of pre-eminent power and glory, was to be the advocate and judge of the human race. . . I feel that the Jewish carpenter could no more have conceived and sustained this character under motives of imposture, than an infant's arm could repeat the deeds of Hercules, or his unawakened intellect comprehend and rival the matchless works of genius. Am I told that the claims of Jesus had their origin, not in imposture but in enthusiasm; that the imagination, kindled by strong feeling, overpowered the judgment so as to give him the notion of being destined to some strange and unparalleled work? I know that enthusiasm, or a kindled imagination, has great power; and we are never to lose sight of it, in judging of the claims of religious teachers. But I say, first, that except in cases where it amounts to insanity, enthusiasm works, in a greater or less degree, according to a man's previous conceptions and modes of thought. In Judea, where the minds of men were burning with feverish expectation of a Messiah, I can easily conceive of a Jew imagining that in himself this ardent conception, this ideal of glory,

more immediate supporters, promising them that when he should obtain his kingdom, they should rule under him over the twelve tribes of Israel. We have traces of the rumour that the people "wished to make him a king". He escaped, however, from their importunity, and charged them to "tell no man that he was the Christ", seeing that his time was not yet come, and probably expecting some divine manifestation in his favour. It is significant, though not perhaps intelligibly explanatory of the intentions of Jesus, that there are many passages scattered throughout the Gospels hinting of swords and warlike demonstrations;* almost obscured by the spiritual views which had been attained when the evangelists wrote, but most likely to be genuine, as they could scarcely have then been invented. At length, as if straightened to accomplish the work given him to do, he boldly threw off the restraints of timidity, or of unwillingness as a spiritually-minded enthusiast to enter upon the repugnant task of worldly conflict; and trusting yet in miraculous support, made his public entry into Jerusalem, encouraging his followers to proclaim him the Son of David.† Soon after a short-lived triumph, as Judas and many others had fallen victims to their patriotic fanaticism, so also Jesus was crucified and his title set up in mockery over him, "The King of the Jews".——It is dificult to imagine the real state of the case otherwise than this, if we look plainly at the salient historical points rising out of the glorified mist thrown over the story of Jesus. If he had been merely a teacher of righteousness‡ there seems no meaning in his stirring up the Galileans to "follow him" with the watch-word of their expectations; and no ground for his political condemnation. Those unbelievers who cannot reconcile this mixture of political and spiritual ambition with their conception of his character, generally leave the whole as buried in impenetrable obscurity.

XXXV. subsequently spiritualized, and adapted to the condition of the Gentiles.

The followers of Jesus were confounded by this termination of the career of one whom they had trusted to be "he that should redeem Israel": yet shortly after we find them in closer union than before, confidently proclaiming, with every proof of sincerity, that Jesus was risen from the dead, and should yet return to sit on the throne of David. It is *possible* they might have reasoned themselves into this belief, by their attachment to their Master, and conviction of the justness of his claim to special Divine interposition: but it is more probable that some real incident had served to clench their loosened faith. Such an incident

* See *Appendix* to *Origin of Christianity*, p. 499. 2d Edition.

† This view of the *disappointment* of Jesus, in the non-fulfilment of his projects and expectations, brings out an intelligible and deeply touching meaning in his described resignation.

‡ Jesus has besides little resemblance to a leader of a "school," as Salvador calls him. See *Jesus-Christ et sa doctrine*, l. II. ch. VII.

was to be realized. I can conceive of his seating himself in fancy on the throne of David, and secretly pondering the means of his appointed triumphs. But that a Jew should fancy himself the Messiah, and at the same time should strip that character of all the attributes which had fired his youthful imagination and heart,—that he should start aside from all the feelings and hopes of his age, and should acquire a consciousness of being destined to a wholly new career, and one as unbounded as it was new, this is exceedingly improbable; and one thing is certain, that an imagination so erratic, so ungoverned, and able to generate the conviction of being destined to a work so immeasurably disproportioned to the power of the individual, must have partaken of insanity. Now, is it conceivable, that an individual, mastered by so wild and fervid an imagination, should have sustained the dignity claimed by Christ, should have acted worthily the highest part ever assumed on earth? Would not his enthusiasm have broken out amidst the peculiar excitements of the life of Jesus, and have left a touch of madness on his teaching and conduct? Is it to such a man that we should look for the inculcation of a new and perfect form of virtue, and for the exemplification of humanity in its fairest form?"*

XXXV. "The most extraordinary parts of this new history of Christianity are the inconsistent proceedings attributed to Joseph of Arimathea, —the boldness with which on Friday he claims the body of Jesus, and the sudden terror in which he puts it out of the way, before Sunday morning,—and the confidence with which it is assumed that a mere *report* of the resurrection, totally unsupported except by the successful abstraction of the body, should have the same effect on the minds and conduct of his Jewish followers, as the re-appearance of Jesus himself."†

"It is notorious that, vast as is the change from 'Go *not* to the Gentiles' [in the first charge to the Apostles, Matt. x. 5.] to 'Be witnesses for me unto the uttermost ends of the earth,' [after the resurrection, Acts i. 8] there was yet no improvement in the views of the Apostles. How little they had adopted the spiritual conceptions of Jesus, is shown in the question which they put to him after the Resurrection had revived the earthly dreams which, for a while, had utterly sunk into his grave. Jesus dies. Their ambitious prospects die with him... Suddenly he reappears. The rumour is discredited, but evidence follows upon evidence, and disbelief becomes impossible. The dejected Disciples lift their heads from the dust. The resurrection of their Leader brings them back to the same state of expectation as before his death. It opens no new view upon their souls, but it scatters the despondencies of the cross and of the tomb, and re-animates their former trust in Jesus as their Messiah. Worldly visions, scared away by terrors, troop back into their souls. Jesus, raised up by God, becomes a more exalted instrument to work out their magnificent, but earthly schemes; and, flushed with passionate an-

* Channing's Works, pp. 425, 427. † *Prospective Review*, No. I. February, 1845. *Review of Hennell's Origin of Christianity*, p. 29.

may have been the removal of the body of Jesus by Joseph of Arimathea* from a spot where it might have led to dangerous excitement on the part of the disciples; which, together with the message of the agent whom he left in charge of the tomb to the women, was a probable foundation for the exaggerated stories that naturally grew up in the course of we cannot say how many years, and were eagerly accepted in the prevalent state of heated imagination;—though we must remember that it is on record that at first the disciples treated the report of the women as idle tales.

The band of the disciples then remained together, having all things in common, after the manner of the Essenes, waiting for the return of their leader when the time of restitution of all things should arrive; unmolested by the worldly rulers, who entertained no jealous fear of the Messiah who was to come from heaven. Many were added unto them, and the community prospered in peace, until an internal dissention broke their harmony. Although Jesus had not opposed the law of Moses, yet the spirit of his teaching was to make light of ceremonies in comparison with morality. Hence he came to be regarded by some eager adherents as rightfully superseding the national lawgiver. The zeal of the stricter Jews was kindled for the honour of Moses; and Stephen, one of the most forward of the liberalizing converts, was stoned. This persecution widened the difference of the parties, and drove the innovating section more willingly into contact with the Gentiles. Some of these were attracted to this reformed Judaism; and with their conversion began to appear a modification in the titles and offices ascribed to Christ. Instead of being the mere King of Israel, he was now invested with the character of the destined Judge of Mankind. As their numbers increased, the disciples became consolidated into a sect, and while still regarded by the undistinguishing heathens as Jews, and by friendly Jewish writers as Essenes, amongst a closer circle of acquaintance they began to be called Christians at Antioch, A.D. 43.

Peter, at first the leader of the liberal party, shrank from the odium to be incurred with his own countrymen; and his place was taken by a new convert much better fitted for it,—Saul of Tarsus, a young man of Jewish extraction, though belonging to a Gentile nation. With him Christianity took a new and grander form. The narrow band of Jewish disciples, waiting for the re-appearing of their Lord from heaven, would, in all human probability, soon have dissolved away, and left no trace in the world's history: but Paul, with his unconquerable energy, his vehement impulses, his generous and liberal mind, his Rabbinical learning, and, above all, his independent genius, laid the broad foundations of a

* See an examination of the motives that would naturally have induced Joseph to this step in *Origin of Christianity*, p. 228, *et seq.* And also the reasons for believing the death of Jesus to have been real, and that he did not actually survive his crucifixion,—as is held by some unbelievers,—in *Appendix*, p. 491-3.

ticipations, they ask the risen Saviour to become the agent of their unspiritual projects: 'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' It is evident that the views of the Apostles had undergone no spiritual change. . . The Apostles were forbidden preaching to the Samaritans and Gentiles, because their exclusiveness and unchristian temper must have prevented their doing so to any good effect. They were not then qualified to preach a Gospel of peace in the spirit of it. . . They would not only have injured its gentle spirit, but have misrepresented its substance. They would have proclaimed it as they conceived it,—a system half religious and half political,—a temporal kingdom set up for the true believers, into which all nations were to be merged by bowing to the sceptre and adopting the livery of Judea. . . This gorgeous error disqualified them to preach the Gospel, whether to Gentiles, Samaritans, or Jews. . . Whilst yet Christ lived, and their false imaginations lived also, they had a commission to *announce* him, but in no case to *represent* him. The event of *his death* introduced a necessary change into the conceptions of his Apostles. They could not retain their former ideas of the earthly reign of Messiah in connection with the crucified Jesus. If they held by their former faith, they must abandon Jesus. If they held by Jesus, they must reconstruct their faith. But God takes care that they shall hold by Jesus,—and this is his mode of spiritualizing their conceptions of Christ and Christianity. Jesus returns to Earth to show that God had been with him; and again he leaves Earth for Heaven, to repel the imagination which might possibly arise, nay, which actually had arisen, that even yet he might raise his spiritual standard on Earth, and realize the gigantic illusion of the Jews. By this means the Apostles were placed in this position:—they must retain their faith in Jesus as the Messiah, for how could they hold out against such evidence as Jesus rising from the tomb and Jesus passing into the skies? yet, if they are to regard Jesus as their Messiah, they must modify all their former views, and conceive of the Christ anew. And accordingly this was the plan and process of their conversion, of their introduction to true Christianity, of their spiritual enlargement."*

"As the thunder-cloud moves in a direction seemingly contrary to the wind, so the Christian faith sped onwards in the very teeth of influences best calculated to obstruct it. The single fact that Judea was its birthplace would go far to neutralize whatever contagious power it might else have exerted over the polished Greek and the haughty Roman. The Gentile world repaid with liberal interest the contempt in which it was held by the Jewish people—and not even in our own day would any novelty of doctrine originating amongst their now scattered descendants encounter stronger or more inveterate antipathies, than were opposed to the reception of Christianity from so despised a quarter, in the age of Tiberius and Nero. This, however, was not the only, nor the greatest barrier to the progress of the new movement in the Roman Empire. The

* *Prospective Review*, p. 24-27.

religion that should embrace Gentile as well as Jew, bond and free, within its world-wide influence.——As a Pharisee, he believed in the doctrine of the resurrection; he made no difficulty as to accepting the reports of the bodily revivification of Jesus, though he attached no doctrinal importance to them. To him, who had never seen Jesus in the flesh, the Christ was only significant as an embodiment of the religious ideas in which he had been nourished, or, more still, which had sprung up in his own creative mind; he was the fulfilment of the prophetic oracles, the incarnation of the mystic emanation of Deity, of which Jewish Rabbis taught as well as philosophers of Greece. But it was not all at once that Paul formed his spiritual creed. He too, like the rest, was looking for the Lord Jesus to appear in the clouds, and make an end of the world; until long disappointment, and the practical effect of his personal labours in organizing churches, ripened his views into a form that so happily fell in with the spiritual want of the age, as to be hailed with enthusiasm, and to spread with a success that well seemed to authorize them as divine.

The course of events need be traced no farther. Christianity, once started from the personal influence of the character of Jesus, was now settled as a doctrine, for which the world was prepared.

XXXVI.

The course of other religions had prepared its way.

"That it crystallized round a particular person may have been an accident; but in its essence, as soon as the widening intercourse of the nations forced the Jewish mind into contact with the Indian and the Persian and the Grecian, such a religion was absolutely inevitable.

It was the development of Judaism in being the fulfilment of the sacrificial theory, and the last and purest conception of a personal God lying close above the world, watching, guiding, directing, interfering. Its object was no longer the narrow one of the temporal interests of a small people. The chrysalis had burst its shell, and the presiding care extended to all mankind, caring not now for bodies only but for souls. It was the development of Parsism in settling the vast question of the double principle, the position of the evil spirit, his history, and the method of his defeat; while Zoroaster's doctrine of a future state was now for the first time explained and justified; and his invisible world of angels and spirits, and the hierarchies of the seven heavens, were brought in subjection to the same one God of the Jews.

It was the development of the speculative Greek philosophy of the school of Plato, of the doctrine of the Spirit, and the mysterious Trinity, the ἓν καὶ πᾶν, the word or intellect becoming active in the primal Being; while, lastly, the Hindoo doctrine of the incarnation is the uniting element in which the other three combine, and which interpenetrates them with an awful majesty which singly they had not known."*

From all these sources Christianity assimilated to itself elements which contributed to its perfection, and placed it in harmony with the feelings

* *Nemesis of Faith*, by J. A. Froude, M.A. 1849. p. 88.

general condition of society, both polite and rude, cultivated and uncultivated, was such as to render its extensive success to the last degree improbable. The intellect of the times was in close and unblushing association with the grossest immorality. . It was, therefore, for the most part, devoid of insight into any of the more elevated regions of thought, and was more apt to analyze than to feel. It had already torn to shreds, by its acute and laborious criticism, the mythology which it had received from past ages—and proud of its freedom, it was ill-disposed to take upon itself a new and much more stringent yoke. Philosophy, confident in its own resources, desired no revelation of the Divine will. It might be politic to patronize religion as a convenient restriction upon the turbulent passions of the vulgar, but what sage of those times ever dreamed of making it the rule of his private life? The dogmatic tone of Christianity, its exclusive pretensions, and its apparently humble origin, would be far more likely to shock the pride and prejudices of the educated, than would its moral purity and sublime spirituality to elicit admiration or beget attachment. And among the common people, the difficulties to be overcome were stupendous. A sensuous superstition indulgent to, and even provocative of, the lowest appetites of human nature, overspread 'the masses' like a foul leprosy."*

XXXVI. "Some have pretended that Christianity grew from the ruins of the ancient faith. But this is not true; for the decline of the heathen systems was the product of causes singularly adverse to the origination of such a system as Christianity. One cause was the monstrous depravity of the age. . . Another principal agent in loosening the foundations of the old system, was Philosophy, a noble effort indeed of the human intellect, but one which did nothing to prepare the way for Christianity. The most popular systems of philosophy at the birth of Christianity were the Sceptical and the Epicurean, the former of which turned religion into a jest, denied the possibility of arriving at truth, and cast the mind on an ocean of doubt in regard to every subject of inquiry; whilst the latter placed happiness in ease, inculcated a calm indifference both as to this world and the next, and would have set down the Christian doctrine of self-sacrifice, of suffering for truth and duty, as absolute insanity. Now I ask in what single point do these systems touch Christianity, or what impulse could they have given to its invention? There was indeed another philosophical sect of a nobler character; I mean the Stoical. This maintained that virtue was the supreme good, and it certainly nurtured some firm and lofty spirits amidst the despotism which then ground all classes in the dust. But the self-reliance, sternness, apathy, and pride of the Stoic, his defiance and scorn of mankind, his want of sympathy with human suffering, and his extravagant exaggerations of his own virtue, placed this sect in singular opposition to Christianity; so that our religion might as soon have sprung from Scepticism and Epicureanism, as from Stoicism. There was another system, if it

* *Bases of Belief*, p. 12-14.

of the age:—that is to say, the vital portions of former religions shook off their effete garb, and flourished with new vigour under the fresh form. Such religions and philosophies, on the other hand, as had *no* vital portion, but lay like dead rubbish on the mental soil, by their very decay fertilized that soil, or, by their exhaustion of its power of producing one kind of fruit, prepared the way for a crop of an opposite quality. By this process of re-action, common to all revolutions, we can see how the progress of Christianity was *naturally* aided by being in some instances the reverse of former modes of thought, as in others it was by its similarity and adaptibility to modes that were still in vigour. *Here* it was eagerly accepted because it was the *new* thing required; *there*, it was willingly acquiesced in because substantially the same as the *old* that still satisfied.

## AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION THAT ITS INFLUENCE ON THE SUBSEQUENT COURSE

XXXVII.

It has wrought no great and sudden changes on bodies of men.

Christianity has never effected any great changes on a sudden: its influence is on all hands confessed to have been silent and gradual; working, in fact, just like other processes of amelioration. It has never made any impression upon bodies of men that were not *prepared* for its reception. As we see in our own day that the "conversions" wrought by missionaries amongst savages are merely nominal and external, so we find in history, that barbarians who were baptized and called Christians, were only changed in the very slight degree in which new circumstances modified their characters.

XXXVIII.

It was itself subject to outward influences.

Professor Newman says:* "I at length saw how untenable is the argument drawn from the *inward* history of Christianity in favour of its super-human origin. In fact: this religion cannot pretend to *self-sustaining power*. Hardly was it started on its course, when it began to be polluted by the heathenism and false philosophy around it. With the decline of national genius and civil culture it became more and more debased. So far from being able to uphold the existing morality of the best Pagan teachers, it became barbarized itself, and sank into deep superstition and manifold moral corruption. From ferocious men it learnt ferocity. When civil society began to coalesce into order, Christianity also turned for the better, and presently learned to use the wisdom of Latin moralists. By gradual and human means, Europe, like ancient Greece, grew up towards better political institutions; and Christianity improved with them,—the Christianity of the more educated. Beyond Europe, where there have

* *Phases of Faith:* or *Passages from the history of my Creed*, by F. W. Newman. 3d. Ed. p. 98.

BE ACCOUNTED FOR NATURALLY.]

be worthy of the name, which prevailed in Asia, and was not unknown to the Jews, often called the Oriental philosophy. But this, though certainly an improvement on the common heathenism, was visionary and mystical, and placed happiness in an intuition or immediate perception of God, which was to be gained by contemplation and ecstacies, by emaciation of the body, and desertion of the world. I need not tell you how infinitely removed was the practical, benevolent spirit of Christianity, from this spurious sanctity and profitless enthusiasm. I repeat it, then, that the various causes which were silently operating against the established heathen systems in the time of Christ, had no tendency to suggest and spread such a religion as he brought, but were as truly hostile to it as the worst forms of heathenism."*

AS TO ITS POSITION IN HISTORY:

OF EVENTS HAS NOT BEEN OTHER THAN NATURAL.

XXXVII. If the national changes attendant on Christianity have not been sudden, they have been sure and permanent. And this permanence has not been owing to the *vis inertiæ* in the character of the people, as in the case of Brahmanism, Buddhism, and Mahomedanism, for—"Its greatest successes have been achieved over those races of men which are most distinguished by the activity of their intellect, and at those epochs in the world's history when mind has been most awake. . . At starting, its most rapid and triumphant course was westward. . At the present moment its governing influence is chiefly exerted upon the Anglo-Saxon family. . . And those nations which most reverently cherish it as a *faith*, and are least disposed to treat it as a *speculation*, are specially distinguished by their disposition and aptitude for turning their conceptions into acts. It is not among theorists and dreamers that the gospel met with its most ready reception, or developed its highest spiritual vitality. . Take the first two centuries of our era, or that which includes the Reformation, or that which has elapsed since the labours of Whitfield and Wesley, and it will be difficult to select another interval of equal duration in which the power, the activity, the freedom, or the daring of human intellect have been so conspicuously displayed. Other religions may flourish best when mind is most stagnant. Not so this, at least if we are to credit the general tenor of its history. It matters little how we explain this—whether we conclude intellectual activity to have usually sprung out of, or conduced to, the progress of Christianity. In either case, attention is challenged to the fact that its perpetuity has been maintained under conditions wholly dissimilar from those which have characterized the Oriental systems alluded to. The *vis inertiæ* and the *vis vitæ* cannot be fairly treated as if they were the same."†

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* Channing's *Works*, p. 410. † *Bases of Belief*, pp. 25, 28.

been no such institutions, there has been no Protestant Reformation :—that is, in the Greek, Armenian, Syrian, Coptic churches. . . Christianity rises and sinks with political and literary influences : in so far, it does not differ from other religions."

XXXIX.

It was propagated on a large scale by the sword.

"If it is true that the *sword* of Mohammed was the influence which subjected Arabia, Egypt, Syria and Persia to the religion of Islam, it is no less true that the Roman empire was first conquered to Christianity by the sword. Before Constantine, Christians were but a small fraction of the empire. In the preceding century they had gone on deteriorating in good sense and most probably therefore in moral worth, and had made no such rapid progress in numbers as to imply that by the mere process of conversion they would ever Christianize the empire. . . We may say, in some sense, that the Christian soldiers in Constantine's armies conquered the empire (that is, the imperial appointments) for Christianity. But Paganism subsisted, even in spite of imperial allurements, until at length the sword of Theodosius violently suppressed heathen worship. So also, it was the spear of Charlemagne which drove the Saxons to baptism, and decided the extirpation of Paganism from Teutonic Europe. There is nothing in all this to distinguish the outward history of Christianity from that of Mohammedism. Barbarous tribes, now and then, venerating the superiority of our knowledge, adopt our religion : so have Pagan nations in Africa voluntarily become Mussulmans. But neither we nor they can appeal to any case, where an old State-religion has yielded without warlike compulsion to the force of heavenly truth,—'charm we never so wisely.'"*

XL.

It was not the influence that raised Woman.

"We are told that Christianity is the great influence which has raised *womankind*:—this does not appear to be true. The old Roman matron was, relatively to her husband, morally as high as in modern Italy : nor is there any ground for supposing that modern women have advantage over

* *Phases of Faith*, p. 100.

ON COURSE OF EVENTS.]

XXXVIII. "The Reformation arose, *not* from the Bible, *but* from Free Learning! This appears to us like saying that the harvest comes, not from the seed-corn, but from good farming; or that the ship makes its voyage, not by the wind, but by navigation. Would our author have had the Bible produce the Reformation *without* Free Learning,—that is, without being applied to the human mind at all? If not, what is the meaning of this false antithesis, between the state of the human faculties and the object on which they are employed? and of the strange exaction that the Scriptures, once put on parchment, should be able, whether men could procure and read them or not,—to overrule all the causes of internal corruption and external ruin, beneath which the Roman civilization succumbed? A 'self-sustaining' power like this, a power to remain independent of perturbation from foreign influences, and to evolve like phenomena from the most unlike conditions of the human mind, is intrinsically inconceivable. Be a religion ever so divine,—from the moment that it is consigned to human media, and delivered to the keeping of mankind, it inevitably shares the fate of all the intellectual and spiritual possessions of our race, and rises and sinks with the tides of history."*

XXXIX. "If the imperial armies which 'conquered the empire for Christianity' were to any considerable extent—and it must have been *ex hypothesi* to a prevailing extent—composed of Christians, Christianity had made at least equal progress in the ranks of civil life... Supposing Constantine a *political* convert, it could only be because he saw that Christianity had done its work to such an extent as to render it more probable that it would assist *him* than that he could assist *it*.. Is it not plain that Christianity must in some fashion have conquered its millions before Constantine or any other man was likely to attempt to conquer the empire *for* Christianity, or to succeed in so doing if he had? Is there an instance on record of a people suddenly, at a moment's notice, changing its religion, or rather—for this is the true representation—of *many* different nations changing their *many*, different religions, at the simple command of their sovereign, and he too an upstart? In two cases, and in only two, it may be done; first by an unsparing use of the sword, the brief, simple alternative of Mohamet, Death or the Koran; the other, when the new form of belief has converted the bulk or a large portion of the nation; of which, in this case, the conversion of the army is a tolerably significant indication."†

XL. "Unjust as it is to measure the ultimate tendency of an historical influence by its incipient phenomena, there does appear to us a manifest trace, in the first age itself, of an ennobling influence from the recognized spiritual equality of the sexes. The women of Galilee and the sisters of Bethany, the helpers of Paul in Macedonia and Corinth,

* *Prospective Review.* No. XXIII. August, 1850. *Review of the Phases of Faith,* pp. 400, 401. Also contained in a volume of *Miscellanies,* by James Martineau.

† *Eclipse of Faith.* 1852. pp. 420-422.

the ancient in Spain and Portugal, where Germanic have been counteracted by Moorish influences. The relative position of the sexes in Homeric Greece exhibits nothing materially different from the present day. In Armenia and Syria perhaps Christianity has done the service of extinguishing polygamy; this is creditable, though nowise miraculous. Judaism also unlearnt polygamy, and made an unbidden improvement upon Moses. In short, only in countries where Germanic sentiment has taken root, do we see marks of any elevation of the female sex superior to that of Pagan antiquity; and as this elevation of the German woman in her deepest Paganism was already striking to Tacitus and his contemporaries, it is highly unreasonable to claim it as an achievement of Christianity."*

XLI.

**It has not been the means of abolishing slavery.**

"Undue credit has been claimed for Christianity as the foe and extirpator of slavery. Englishmen of the 19th century boldly denounce slavery as an immoral and abominable system. There may be a little fanaticism in the former which this sometimes assumes; but not one of the Christian apostles even opens his lips at all against slavery. Paul sent back the fugitive Onesimus to his master Philemon, with kind recommendations and apologies for the slave, but without a hint to the master that he ought to make him legally free. At this day, in consequence, the New Testament is the argumentative stronghold of those in the United States of America who are trying to keep up the accursed system. Indeed, for several centuries in which Christianity acted in the Roman empire, it developed no recorded and public opposition to slavery as an institution. The humanity of good Pagan emperors softened the harshness of the laws of bondage, and manumission was common; but that slavery, as a system, is essentially immoral, no Christian of those days appears to have suspected. Yet it existed in its worst forms under Rome."†

* *Phases of Faith*, p. 102. † *Ibid*, 1st Ed., p. 166. [In the 3d Ed. the subject is much enlarged in answer to opponents.]

the martyred deaconesses of Lyons and Carthage, were surely lifted by their faith into a consciousness of the claims of the soul, to which nothing in Pagan antiquity can present a moral parallel. . . We certainly believe that the chief function of the first eight centuries of the Church was to hand over the religion to its proper receptacle in the Teutonic mind,—there for the first time to exhibit on a large scale its native vitality and find its appointed nourishment. Still, if we remember right, the chivalric poetry arose, not in the Germanic race, but among the Romanesque tribes of Spain, France, and Italy ; and flourished most where the Albigensian spirit had freest way, and the power of the priesthood was most weakened. .. Wherever the characteristic sentiments of Christianity have had free action, wherever the faith has prevailed that life is a divine trust, committed to souls dear to God, equal among themselves, and each the germ of an immortality, there and there alone has domestic affection been so touched with reverence and confidence, as to retain its freshness to the end, and afford a chastening discipline through life."*

XLI. The object of the Apostles was to teach the religion of Christ, and not to stir up opposition to it by meddling with established institutions ; leaving it to the sure influence of that religion in time to effect every needful improvement.——"Let me suppose you animated to go as missionary to the East to preach this (Mr. Newman's) spiritual system : would you, in addition to all this, publicly denounce the social and political evils under which the nations groan ? If so, your spiritual projects would soon be perfectly understood, and summarily dealt with.—It is vain to say, that, if commissioned by Heaven, and endowed with power of working miracles, you would do so ; for you cannot tell under what limitations your commission would be given : it is pretty certain, that it would leave you to work a moral and spiritual system by moral and spiritual means, and not allow you to turn the world upside down, and mendaciously tell it that you came only to preach peace, while every syllable you uttered would be an incentive to sedition."† "That Christianity opened its arms to the servile class at all, was enough : for in its embrace was the sure promise of emancipation. What more emphatic expression could the religion give of its hostility to slavery than this, that all men were to become Christians, and that no Christian should remain a slave ? Is it imputed as a disgrace, that it put conversion before manumission, and brought them to God, ere it trusted them with themselves ? . . Its Missionary spirit forbade its ever providing itself with slaves from the Pagan class, while its own children had their liberty. It created the simultaneous obligation to make the Pagan a convert, and the convert free. That this tendency exhibited but faint traces in the earliest age of the Church is due, not merely to the small comparative numbers of the disciples, but no less to their expectation of an immediate close to this world's affairs. The only reason why Paul sanctioned contentment in his condition in the converted slave, was that, for so short a time, it was not worth while for

* *Prospective Review*, pp. 395-7. † *Eclipse of Faith*, pp. 419-420.

XLII.

It has encouraged coarse superstitions, and persecuting intolerance.

"It is a lamentable fact, that not only do superstitions about Witches, Ghosts, Devils, and Diabolical Miracles derive a strong support from the Bible, (and in fact have been exploded by nothing but the advance of physical philosophy,)—but what is far worse, the Bible alone has nowhere sufficed to establish an enlightened religious toleration. This is, at first, seemingly unintelligible: for the apostles certainly would have been intensely shocked at the thought of punishing men, in body, purse, or station, for not being Christians, or not being orthodox. Nevertheless, not only does the Old Testament justify bloody persecution, but the New teaches that God will visit men with fiery vengeance *for holding an erroneous creed*;—that vengeance indeed is his, not ours; but that, still, the punishment is deserved. It would appear, that wherever this doctrine is held, possession of power for two or three generations inevitably converts men into persecutors; and in so far, we must lay the horrible desolations which Europe has suffered from bigotry, at the doors, not indeed of the Christian apostles themselves, but of that Bibliolatry which has converted their earliest records into a perfect and eternal law."*

AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION

THAT ITS PRACTICAL EFFECTS AT THE PRESENT

XLIII.

The present age is notoriously accused of Infidelity.

Again and again in ecclesiastical writers we find the complaint against the want of faith shown in their age, ascribing it to the desperate wickedness of the people. In our own day, the outcry against infidelity has become louder and more general than ever, and, what is a new feature, is now accompanied by the forced acknowledgment that it is not to be so summarily judged and disposed of. Though an unbelieving, this is confessed by all candid thinkers to be not an irreligious age. A spirit of earnest searching inquiry is astir, that will not be put down by authority, but will see and know for itself: very different from the sudden outbursts of licentious rebellion against over-restraint, which soon subsides into more confirmed superstition; far deeper, and more formidable to those who hold that salvation is to be had only in clinging to the past.

In all the more civilized portions of the continent of Europe, this species of Infidelity is making large advances; and not merely in Catholic countries, where it may be said to be the natural reaction against Romish abuses, but now especially, exercising a far nearer influence over us, in

* *Phases of Faith*, 3d Ed. p. 112.

ON COURSE OF EVENTS.]

any man to change his state; he that was free, was already the Lord's bondsman; and he that was bound, the Lord's freeman. In proportion as this anticipation retreated, society began to feel the tendency of the new religion."*

XLII. "Never, perhaps, has a religious system been so put to the proof as this, by the misapprehensions, the follies, and the crimes of its own disciples.. Its entire aim and scope were gradually lost sight of by its adherents, and it became ultimately perverted to ends which its own principles repudiated.. Heathenism was grafted upon the stock of the gospel. It was made to subserve the vilest purposes of king-craft. It has been exhibited as giving its sanction to propositions which reason rejects, to institutions which experience has proved to be incurably pernicious, and to conduct which all the moral instincts of our nature abhor... Even to this day it is exposed to grave imputations by the ambitious, selfish, corrupt and tyrannical maxims and practices of its professed exponents and subjects. It has seldom had an embodiment worthy of itself. It is remarkable that it has not sunk under the load of follies and atrocities with which its own disciples have burdened its name and reputation—more remarkable by far that it should have lived through the stifling atmosphere of ecclesiastical imposture, than that it should have survived the fiery baptism of persecution."†

AS TO ITS POSITION IN HISTORY:

DAY, ARE INCOMMENSURATE WITH ITS CLAIM.

XLIII. "The intellectual scepticism of the present day appears to us to be distinguished by two elements—it is partly speculative and partly critical. No doubt, it has allotted work to do of which Christianity will hereafter reap the benefit. Neither do we question that it has taken deep hold of many sincere, conscientious, and highly cultivated minds, which command our respect for the freedom and fearlessness of their inquiries after truth, although none for the decision at which they have arrived. In truth, we demur to the appropriateness of the title which they too often arrogate to themselves, of *rationalists*—meaning thereby men who depend for their religious convictions upon the authority of reason. That is not reason, in our sober estimate, which sets aside an immense body of facts either by a speculative dogma, or by the utmost ingenuity of criticism. The highest interests of a man, rest, surely, upon more tangible and solid grounds than can be undermined by subtle intellectual theories, or frittered away by acute and learned criticism."‡

"There are, no doubt, some minds amongst us, whose power we admit, and whose perversion of power we lament, who have bewildered themselves by *really* deep meditation on inexplicable mysteries; who demand certainty

* *Prospective Review*, pp. 397-8. † *Bases of Belief*, pp. 22-25. ‡ *Ibid*, p. 409

Protestant Germany, where, out of patient, devout, study of the Scriptures, there has gone forth a stream of literature that seems threatening to sweep away every vestige of solid belief into a sea of mystic speculation. England is thought, by her pious children, to be the strong-hold of Christianity in such a period of desertion; yet England too shows symptoms of a course of opinion, not suggested from abroad, but spontaneously arising within herself, in strong sympathy with Catholic re-actionists, German theorists, either rationalistic or mystic, and too with American Transcendentalists:—all of them seeking to shake off and soar above the literal form of Christianity, as a cumbrous load no longer to be borne, from which they must needs be freed, in order to have play for the new ideas struggling within them for free expansion and legitimate expression.

XLIV.

Christianity lags behind the age, and is an obstruction to improvement.

Christianity is felt to be out of harmony with the age. While new fields of knowledge are opening in every direction, and widening with the increasing powers of the human mind, she alone preserves her set boundaries, and by the selfish interests of her guardians is made to place herself a barrier in the way of the tide of improvement which, by flowing nevertheless beyond her, shows how far she is left behind. It may safely be asserted, with a challenge to deny it, that there is not a single man of the present day, earnestly attached to any kind of science, who believes in her with the entire and hearty faith of the days of old. Ask the question of any, and, if it be not put off with shifts and evasions, the answer will be either an honest confession of misgiving, or else a pitiful use of phrases with double meaning.

"The great theological movement of the Anglo-Saxons, the great religious movement, is not carried on by the churches but in spite of them. To sum up the theological and religious condition of the Protestant countries as a whole, it must be confessed that there is a great contradiction in the consciousness of the people; that the Popular Theology is at variance with the other sciences, and is fading from the respect of the people. A great intellectual movement goes on, a great moral, philanthropic, and religious movement, but the preachers in the churches do little directly either to diffuse new truths, or to kindle a deeper sentiment of piety or philanthropy. The Protestant Church counts this its chief functions—to appease the wrath of God and to administer the Scriptures to men, not to promote piety and morality.——Take the whole Christian world at this day—where is the vigour, the energy, the faith in God, the love for man which marked the lives of those persons who built churches with their lives? Taken as a whole, the clergy of Christendom oppose the foremost science, justice, philanthropy, and piety of the age. The ecclesiastical institutions seem to bear the same relation to mankind now, as the ecclesiastical institutions of the Hebrews and Heathens 2000 years ago.

where certainty is not given to man, or demand for truths which are established by sufficient evidence, *other* evidence than those truths will admit. . . But we are at the same time convinced that in our day there are thousands of youth who are falling into the same errors and perils from sheer vanity and affectation; who admire most what they least understand, and adopt all the obscurities and paradoxes they stumble upon, as a cheap path to a reputation for profundity. . . It may be feared that many young minds in our day are exposed to the danger of falling into one or other of the prevailing forms of unbelief, and especially into that of pantheistic mysticism, from rashly meditating in the cloudy regions of German philosophy, on difficulties which would seem beyond the limits of human reason, but which that philosophy too often promises to solve—with what success we may see from the rapid succession and impenetrable obscurity of its various systems."*

XLIV. "Other things being equal, you will find that those who have had the best general mental training, are the best prepared for a correct and profitable reception of religious instruction; and that those who have been taught little or nothing besides what are called the general principles of Religion and Morality, not only do not embrace those principles so well as those of more cultivated understanding, but will be still more deficient in the right *application* of such principles."†

"We may be confident, that a judicious and honest search after truth, conducted without any unfair prejudice, or insidious design, can never ultimately lead to any conclusion that is really irreconcileable with a true revelation: but so totally distinct are the objects respectively proposed, that innumerable varieties of opinion as to scientific subjects may, and in fact do, exist, among men who are all sincerely agreed in acknowledging the authority of Scripture."‡

"Christianity may feel assured that, as in so many past instances of premature triumph, on the part of her enemies, the ground they occupy will one day be her own; that the very discoveries, apparently hostile, of science and philosophy, will be ultimately found elements of her strength. Thus has it been, to a great extent, with the discoveries in chronology and history; and thus it will be, we are confident, (and to a certain extent has been already,§) with those in geology. That science has done much, not only to render the old theories of Atheism untenable, and to familiarize the minds of men to the idea of miracles, by that of successive creations, but to confirm the scriptural statement of the comparatively recent origin of our race. Only the men of science and the men of theology must alike guard against the besetting fallacy of

* *Reason and Faith.* Rogers' Essays, pp. 315, 318, note.

† Whately's *Charge on the Right Use of National Afflictions,* Sept. 1848. p. 30.

‡ Whately's Essays, p. 262.

§ "The recent interpretation of the commencement of Genesis,—by which the 1st verse is simply supposed to affirm the original creation of all things, while the 2d immediately refers to the commencement of the human economy,—was suggested by geology, though suspected and indeed adopted by some of the early Fathers." p. 339.

Every year the Science of the scholar separates him further and further from the Theology of the churches. The once united Church is rent into three. The infallibility of the Roman Church—who believes it? the Pope, the superior Catholic clergy? The Infallibility of the Bible,—its divine origin, its miraculous inspiration—do the Scholars of Christendom believe that in defiance of Mathematics, Physics, History, and Psychology? They leave it to the clergy. The Trinity is shaken; men lose their faith in the efficacy of water-baptism, and other artificial sacraments, to save the souls of men; miracles disappear from the belief of all but the clergy. Do they believe them? The Catholic doubts the mediæval miracles of his own Church; it is in vain that the Virgin Mary reappears in Switzerland and France; that Saint Januarius annually liquefies his blood; that statues weep: the stomachs of reapers refuse such bread. It avails nothing to threaten scientific doubters with eternal hell. Superior talent forsakes the Church,—even in Catholic countries, there are few clergymen of genius, or even great talent. In Protestant Germany, theological genius teaches in the college, not in the pulpit: and with new science destroys the mediæval opinions it was once set to defend. Will the spirit of the human race come back and re-animate the dry bones of dead Theology? When the mummies of Egypt shall worship again their half-forgotten gods—Osiris, Orus, Apis, Isis; when mankind goes back to the other sciences of half-savage life, the Theology of that period may be welcomed again. Not till then."*

XLV.

**Infidelity abounds chiefly amongst working classes.**

The "alarming" spread of Infidelity, become now the common topic of the pulpit and the press, of Episcopal charges and Dissenting harangues, shows itself most obviously amongst the working classes. The following is an official notification of this fact in the "Report upon Religious Worship in England and Wales, founded upon the Census of 1851." "The most important fact which this investigation brings before us is, unquestionably, the alarming number of the non-attendants. Even in the least unfavourable aspect of the figures just presented, and assuming (as no doubt is right) that the 5,288,294 absent every Sunday (out of 12,549,326 able to attend, see Table 21) are not always the same individuals, it must be apparent that a sadly formidable portion of the English people are habitual neglecters of the public ordinances of religion. Nor is it difficult to indicate to what particular class of the community this portion in the main belongs. . .† While the *labouring* myriads of our

* *Theism, Atheism, and the Popular Theology.* By Th. Parker, 1853. Introduction, p. lv.

† [The intermediate sentences are transferred to the opposite page, as bearing upon the Christian side of the argument.]

their kind,—that of too hastily taking for granted that they already know the whole of their respective sciences—'We know but in part, and we prophesy in part.'"*

"Since the introduction of Christianity, human nature has made great progress, and society experienced great changes; and in this advanced condition of the world, instead of losing its application and importance, it is found to be more and more congenial and adapted to man's nature and wants. Men have outgrown the other institutions of that period when Christianity appeared, its philosophy, its modes of warfare, its policy, its public and private economy; but Christianity has never shrunk as intellect has opened, but has always kept in advance of men's faculties, and unfolded nobler views in proportion as they have ascended. The highest powers and affections, which our nature has developed, find more than adequate objects in this religion. Christianity is indeed peculiarly fitted to the more improved stages of society, to the more delicate sensibilities of refined minds, and especially to that dissatisfaction with the present state, which always grows with the growth of our moral powers and affections. As men advance in civilization, they become susceptible of mental sufferings, to which ruder ages are strangers; and these Christianity is fitted to assuage. Imagination and intellect become more restless; and Christianity brings them tranquillity, by the eternal and magnificent truths, the solemn and unbounded prospects, which it unfolds. This fitness of our religion to more advanced stages of society than that in which it was introduced, to wants of human nature not then developed, seems to me very striking. The religion bears the marks of having come from a being who perfectly understood the human mind, and had power to provide for its progress. This feature of Christianity is of the nature of prophecy. It was an anticipation of future ages; and when we consider among whom our religion sprung, where, but in God, can we find an explanation of this peculiarity?"†

XLV. Mr. Horace Mann says: "The middle classes have augmented rather than diminished that devotional sentiment and strictness of attention to religious services by which, for several centuries, they have so eminently been distinguished. With the upper classes, too, the subject of religion has obtained of late a marked degree of notice, and a regular church-attendance is now ranked amongst the recognized proprieties of life. It is to satisfy the wants of these two classes that the number of religious structures has of late years so increased."‡ "The Christian Church has not been backward to investigate the causes of her ill-success with these the more especial objects of her mission. . One chief cause of the dislike which the labouring population entertain for religious services is thought to be the maintenance of those distinctions by which they are separated as a class from the class above them. Working men, it is contended, cannot enter our religious structures without having pressed upon

* *Reason and Faith*, p. 345. † Channing's *Works*, p. 332. ‡ *Report, &c.*, p. 93.

country have been multiplying with our multiplied material prosperity, it cannot, it is feared, be stated that a corresponding increase has occurred in the attendance of this class in our religious edifices. More especially in cities and large towns it is observable how absolutely insignificant a portion of the congregation is composed of artizans. They fill, perhaps, in youth, our National, British, and Sunday Schools, and there receive the elements of a religious education; but, no sooner do they mingle in the active world of labour than, subjected to the constant action of opposing influences, they soon become as utter strangers to religious ordinances as the people of a heathen country. . Probably, indeed, the prevalence of *infidelity* has been exaggerated, if the word be taken in its popular meaning, as implying some degree of intellectual effort and decision; but, no doubt, a great extent of negative, inert indifference prevails, the practical effects of which are much the same. There is a sect, originated recently, adherents to a system called 'Secularism'; the principal tenet being that, as the fact of a future life is (in their view) at all events susceptible of *some* degree of doubt, while the fact and the necessities of a present life are matters of direct sensation, it is therefore prudent to attend exclusively to the concerns of that existence which is certain and immediate—not wasting energies required for present duties by a preparation for remote, and merely possible, contingencies. This is the creed which probably with most exactness indicates the faith which, virtually though not professedly, is entertained by the masses of our working population. . They are *unconscious Secularists.*"*

XLVI.

The divisions in the Churches are signs of their decay.

Thus far is apparent to the official eye: but, also, in those middle and upper classes whose church-going habits furnish not unsatisfactory statistics, how much there is of unsettled opinion and renunciation of belief, has not to be sought far in abundant evidence. The Established Church, in mockery of its title, is convulsed with internal conflicts, and

* *Report*, 1854, p. 93.

their notice some memento of inferiority. The existence of pews and the position of the free seats are, it is said, alone sufficient to deter them from our churches; and religion has thus come to be regarded as a purely middle-class propriety or luxury... A second cause of the alienation of the poor is supposed to be an insufficient sympathy exhibited by professed Christians for the alleviation of their social burdens—poverty, disease, and ignorance... A third cause is supposed to be a misconception on the part of the labouring classes of the motives by which Christian ministers are actuated in their efforts to extend the influence of the Gospel... Another and potent reason is attributable to their *poverty*, to the vice and filth which riot in crowded dwellings.. Better dwellings are suggested as a most essential aid and introduction to the labours of the Christian agent. .. Probably, however, the grand requirement of the case is, after all, a multiplication of the various *agents* by whose zeal religious truth is disseminated. Not chiefly an additional provision of religious *edifices*. The supply of these perhaps, will not much longer, if the present wonderful exertions of the Church be sustained, prove very insufficient for the wants of the community. But an agency is needed to bring into the churches those hostile to religious services.. The people who refuse to hear the gospel in the church must have it brought to them in their own haunts.. Their native and acquired disinclination for religious truth is chiefly of a negative, inert description.. too feeble to present effectual resistance to the inroads of aggressive Christianity invading their own doors... If we could imagine the effects upon a people's temporal condition of two different modes of treatment—education separate from religion, and religion separate from education—doubtless we should gain a most impressive lesson of the inappreciable value of religion even to a nation's physical advancement... Applying to the regulation of their daily conduct towards themselves and society the same high sanctions which control them in their loftier relations, Christian men become, almost inevitably, temperate, industrious, and provident, as part of their religious duty; and Christian citizens acquire respect for human laws from having learnt to reverence those which are divine. The history of men and states shows nothing more conspicuously than this—that in proportion as a pure and practical religion is acknowledged and pursued are individuals materially prosperous, and nations orderly and free."*

XLVI. "The offensive displays of self-sufficiency and flippancy, of ignorance and presumption, found in the productions of the Apostles of the new infidelity of Oxford, are the natural and instructive, though most painful, result of attempting to give predominance to one principle of our nature, where two or more are designed reciprocally to guard and check each other. The excellence of man must consist in the harmonious action

* *Report*, pp. 94-6, 103.

is notoriously held together only by its State organization and temporal benefits. There is at this moment a process of disruption going forward within it, which augurs strongly of an impending downfall, daily widening as it is, and becoming more hopeless of conciliation. It took a definite rise a few years ago, when the spirit of religious earnestness that, it is believed, characterizes this age, first broke out at Oxford. The penetrating intellect of Newman at work there, piercing through the sophistries of Protestantism, then effected an opening through which a host of converts have since followed him to triumphant Rome, draining the church of one class of malcontents; while the more timid followers of Pusey, holding still within the pale of English orthodoxy, were, as it has proved, only the more fatally undermining the national establishment, by introducing into its distracted bosom the pettiest and most vexatious controversies, to fritter away the remnant of its vitality. On the other hand, there was the noble Arnold, striving with his own straight-forward integrity of mind, to reduce this much-sophisticated Church to a simple carrying out of the precepts of Christ: precepts which he saw, if true, must rule in the schoolroom as well as in the sanctuary, in the every-day affairs of life, as well as in closet meditation on the life to come. And he left behind him a body of earnest men of his own training, who are still labouring over the difficult problem to reconcile Christianity with practical worldly life. But all efforts at renovation in the Church have led only to fresh disintegration, and betray the thorough unsoundness of its condition. Numbers of clergymen are daily confessing their abhorrence of the hypocrisy that is required of them, and openly renouncing their profession, like the younger Newman, Froude, Foxton, and many others: while a large proportion,—seeming to be compelled to lay violent constraint upon their wavering convictions, by the desire to retain for their honest philanthropy a means of working moral good,—are forcing their dogmatical difficulties out of sight by involving them in metaphysical sophistications. And of the remaining body of the clergy, can it be disputed that they are more and more losing their influence over the community, and coming to be regarded in the low light of tradesmen recommending their wares, when they offer religion in the set terms and tone of voice prescribed by antiquated usage?*

Amongst Dissenters, every small sect is divided in a similar manner into its orthodox conservatives and liberal innovators, rationalizing or mysticizing according to the bent of their minds: all feeling that old forms are no longer fitting to them, some few endeavouring to repair them by screwing them up to their original stringency, the greater portion trying to shake them off altogether. With regard to the Catholic church little need be said. The question at issue between Catholicism and Infidelity

* See *Philosophy of Necessity*, vol. II. pp. 376-382. *Measures for the amelioration of the condition of the people.*

and proper balance of all the constituents of that nature... Hence the perils attendant upon the attempted separation of reason and faith, and the ruin which results from their actual alienation and hostility. There is no depth of dreary superstition into which men may not sink in the one case, and no extravagance of ignorant presumption to which they may not soar in the other. It is only by the mutual and alternate action of these different forces that man can safely navigate his little bark through the narrow straits and by the dangerous rocks which impede his course; and if Faith spread not the sail to the breeze, or if Reason desert the helm, we are in equal peril." "The experience of the present 'developments' of Oxford teaching may serve to show, how fearfully both outraged reason and outraged faith will avenge the wrongs done them by their alienation and disjunction. Those results, indeed, we predicted in 1843; before a single leader of the Oxford school had gone over to Rome, and before any tendencies to the opposite extreme of Scepticism had manifested themselves. We then affirmed that, those who were contending for the corruptions of the 4th century must inevitably seek their ultimate resting-place in Rome; and that, on the other hand, the extravagant pretensions put forth on behalf of an uninquiring faith, and the desperate assertion that the 'evidence for Christianity' was no stronger than that for 'Church principles,' must, by reaction, lead on to an outbreak of infidelity. That prophecy, too, has been to the letter accomplished. Our words were—'We have seen it recently asserted by some of the Oxford School, that there is as much reason for rejecting the most essential doctrines of Christianity—nay, Christianity itself—as for rejecting their 'Church principles.' That, in short, we have as much reason for being infidels as for rejecting the doctrine of Apostolical Succession! What other effect such reasoning can have than that of compelling men to believe that there is nothing between infidelity and popery, and of urging them to make a selection between the two, we know not... Indeed, we fully expect that, as a reaction of the present extravagances, of the revival of obsolete superstition, we shall have ere long to fight over again the battle with a modified form of infidelity, as now with a modified form of popery. Thus, probably, for some time to come, will the human mind continue to oscillate between the extremes of error; but with a diminished arc at each vibration; until truth shall at last prevail, and compel it to repose in the centre.'"*

Dr. Arnold said: "I hold the Church to be a most divine institution, and eminently characteristic of Christianity, and my abhorrence of the Priestcraft and Succession doctrines.. is grounded on my firm conviction that they are and ever have been in theory and in practice a most formidable device of the great Enemy to destroy the real living Church." It "seems to me the very truth of truths, that Christian unity and the perfection of Christ's Church are independent of theological Articles of opinion; con-

* *Reason and Faith.* Rogers's Essays, pp. 268, 267. Also *Ed. Rev.* April, 1843.

is a plain one of sheer antagonism,—reason in religion, or no reason;—and when such midground as that occupied in England is broken up, the adverse elements cannot do otherwise than fly off in contrary directions, so that, as consistency driven to extremes leads to Infidelity with some, it will inevitably plunge opposite minds into Catholicism. The Wisemans of the latter, rejoicing over the accessions to their ranks, have tried, in the truly politic spirit of their Church, to show how their Universal religion can accommodate itself to the tendencies of every age, and accordingly *now* place their boast in being the real patrons of science: while, in the meantime, Pope Pius shows what he considers the requirements of the age, by convoking at this present time* all his bishops to Rome to assist in obtaining from the "Holy Spirit" a dogmatic decision upon the question of the "immaculate conception"!

Will any one say that such a state of internal discord, and bewildered antagonism as to the nature of that standard to whose authority they all profess to bow, in the churches founded upon it, looks like the result of a Divine Revelation? Is not this rather the natural course of events, when the old doctrines, once believed by those who thought the deepest, come to be the creed only of those least capable of, or disposed to, thought; that is to say, when, as regards the average of opinion, what was once religion has become superstition?

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XLVII.

It shows itself deficient in its moral condition, and in its practical influence.

But then it will be said by many: let the dogmas go,—let even the Pauline doctrine of Grace, hard to be understood, cease to vex plain minds with profitless controversy;—while only we retain the pure morality of the Gospel, we have proof enough that the mission of Jesus was divine.——Is then the *moral* condition, any more than the *religious*, such as bears testimony to a Divine special effort to rectify it?

"There are those who would willingly maintain that Religion is an end and not a means—that Faith has a satisfactory termination in itself, and is not intended to lead to any ulterior object on earth. But they *dare* not say that Religion is not intended to make good men—to improve the world—to repress vice and strengthen virtue—to destroy selfishness and

* [November, 1854.]

sisting in a certain moral state and moral and religious affections, which have existed in good Christians of all ages and all communions, along with an infinitely varying proportion of truth and error; that thus Christ's Church has stood on a rock and never failed."*

"If what we have seen, or read, is all that Christianity is to do for our race,—if the world is never to be converted to Christ, nor the church to be brought to a nearer conformity to the New Testament—then would infidelity triumph, and exultingly affirm that the Son of God had *not* destroyed the works of the devil—that the gospel had been partially, and to a great extent, a failure, and therefore was a fable. We have no apprehension that such a ground of triumph will ever be given to the enemies of our faith. A brighter era is destined to arrive, a golden age is to dawn upon us, when the predictions of prophets, and the descriptions of apostles, are all to be fulfilled, and the earth be full of the knowledge of the Lord... It is impossible even superficially to study the New Testament, and also the pages of ecclesiastical history, and not be entirely convinced that Christianity has never yet been fully developed as it might be expected would be done upon earth, in the character and conduct of the church. There surely must be an age and a state in her history, when this shall be done, and when she shall not only *be*, but shall *appear*, to be cast in the very mould of the inspired volume—when the Sermon on the Mount, the 12th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and the 13th of the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, and the more eminently devout parts of all the other epistles, shall not only be the law, but also the practice of Christians, and the Bible and the church shall exactly agree—when every professor of religion shall be a living exhibition of faith, hope, love, in all their power and beauty."†

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XLVII. "What, then, are the more obvious proofs of the continued action and power of the religious movement commenced by Jesus of Nazareth, furnished by the characteristic condition of modern times? The first grand peculiarity is the simple but vast apparatus which it has erected and systematically keeps in motion for inculcating spiritual truths, for exciting and exercising spiritual affections, and for implanting and nourishing in the hearts of men a sense of spiritual duties. The one day in seven consecrated to physical rest—the institutions which collect men together on that day for worship and instruction—and the appointments which are so well adapted to stir human thought and emotion in reference to the purest, and highest, and worthiest objects of life and effort—may surely be regarded as emphatically distinctive of the faith attributable to the sacred Scriptures... To what a Jew said and did, in Palestine, above

* *Life of Dr. Arnold.* 3d Ed. Vol. II. p. 60; Vol. I. p. 397.

† *The Church in Earnest*, by John Angell James. 1848. pp. 340, 343.

expand benevolence. And they *can* not say that it has done this. On the contrary, the depravity of man is the constant theme of lamentation and reproof in every pulpit. Divines of all sects are continually calling upon their hearers to repent, and reproaching them for their obdurate deafness to the call. Their hearers listen with an apathetic yawn; a few may heave a sigh at the sad truth, while others smile at the ten-times repeated tale; all go out into the world to continue their evil ways; and the preacher himself joins in the courses which he had denounced. A religion thus admitted by its own teachers, after a trial of eighteen hundred years, to be so inefficient for accomplishing its purpose, speaks its own condemnation."*

It mnst be observed, that it is not fair to confound together Christianity with the spirit of philanthropy, as if the two were identical. Love to our fellow-men indeed forms a large element of that moral gospel of Jesus which will carry his name down as a blessing to the latest generations; but it is not that which makes Christianity a *Revelation*, and in that light alone is exception here taken against it. And, it must be repeated, in Christianity philanthropy is not a pure sentiment resting on its own ground, which is the strongest of all, the ground of simple natural feeling and reason; it is not a thing right and excellent *per se*, but is based on the love of God, requiring good to be done to man primarily, if not solely, for the sake of God,—for His honour and glory. This is the true spirit of Christian benevolence, resolving itself in fact into piety; and into piety of a kind which is founded on a narrow human idea of God, and which leads accordingly to narrowmindedness in the conception of what constitutes his glory. Hence persecutions against heresies and supposed blasphemies; hence the zeal for Sabbath observance according to the letter of the "word of God;" hence the call for prayer and fasting when a dangerous epidemic approaches. Christian piety involves by necessity superstitions of this kind, which are so many obstructions in the way of enlightened philanthropy. Even in its benevolences, thus, the department in which Christianity has greatest and best effect, the age is not able to make progress unless its old-world prescribed notions be kept in the background.

And how much does Christianity help the statesman, the magistrate, the man of science, of commerce, of literature, in those concerns which make up the ordinary existence of the world? Still more, how much has it practically to do with every-day life in the home and in the heart? Is it not found to be so difficult, so impossible, to bring it into actual use, that it is truly said a miracle is required to enable it to be acted upon? Before a man can become a Christian, the grace of God must make him a *new creature*. Christianity supposes miracle at its beginning and end, miracle throughout.

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* *The Purpose of Existence*, 1850, p. 238.

1800 years ago, we owe the fact that a very considerable portion of the human family are summoned weekly from the business and cares of the body, to converse with things directly pertaining to God. Make every abatement reasonable from the worth of the actual results, . . still there will remain this broad fact, as a living and thriving offspring of Christianity—that wherever it prevails, wherever it is not thoroughly overlaid by priestcraft, and buried beneath corruptions, a direct and systematic appeal is made on one day in every week to the superior, may we not add, the diviner elements of man's nature ? . . In myriads of instances the truths of Christianity are restoring conscience to its proper supremacy, reforming vicious habits, holding in check evil passions, and quickening, nourishing, and maturing benevolent impulses. . . Men are, even now, brought to a stand in headlong courses of passionate pursuit and enjoyment, by the simple but energetic influence of the gospel story upon their hearts. They are, down to this day, wrought upon by that narrative, and the popular interpretation of it, to achieve a self-conquest, even in the most unlikely circumstances, displaying moral heroism in its highest forms—to renounce the most seductive enticements—to break off the most cherished friendships—to rise above natural affections—to extinguish seemingly implacable resentments—to face manfully the hardest trials—to submit unrepiningly to the bitterest mortifications—to endure with fortitude and cheerfulness the heaviest afflictions—and to trample in the dust the loftiest pride. . . The Christian faith has been, and is, as balm to the wounded conscience. . Through years of sickness it has been as a sympathizing and cheerful companion, suggesting thoughts all radiant of hope, soothing irritation, charming petulance into submissiveness, and awakening and keeping alive, even to the last, that feeling which protracted disease and confinement tend so powerfully to extinguish—an unselfish interest in the welfare of others. Where death has been, and with rude hand has rent asunder tenderest ties, how often has it come like a ministering angel to the mourner, beguiling sorrow of its tears, binding up broken hearts, and whispering, in gentlest accents, to the bereaved, a conviction that all is well. In the hour of sudden peril it has imparted calm assurance, and has helped the timid and the constitutionally feeble to look destruction in the face undismayed. And in the chamber of death, when 'heart and flesh fail', and the departing spirit has bidden its last farewell to the things of time, has it not been to the dying as a visitant from the higher realms, come purposely to light the way-worn traveller through the dark passage of the grave, to his everlasting home ? No poetry in the description of these things can approach the poetry of the things themselves. And they are to be met with everywhere by those who care to look for them."*

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* *Bases of Belief*, pp. 31, 32, 35, 36, 38, 39.

XLVIII. The course of the argument, then, against Christianity, has been to show :——That the idea ofmiraculous interposition, in general, gives a view of Deity that is at variance with the principles which are to be gathered from Nature ; and that, judging by experience, such interposition would appear to be opposed to the natural development and progress of humanity,—which, indeed, are plainly set aside and disregarded in the supposed need of a special dispensation of Revelation, inasmuch as it is based upon the unwarranted theological assumption that man has fallen from his original condition, and is impotent to help himself without super-added divine assistance. That, if a Revelation were given, it is difficult to understand how it could be known and proved as such. That, in fact, the Christian Revelation is deficient in such attestation, both on external and internal evidence ; that, in it, the anthropomorphic idea of God, which is here carried out to its fullest extent, though in its most engaging form, has produced results that make obvious its inherent contradiction with nature and reason ; that the dogmatic attribution of Deity to the human personality of Jesus Christ, has been the occasion of disastrous confusion of thought ; that the doctrine of imputed righteousness and sacrificial atonement for sin, is, especially, at direct issue with natural morality ; while the doctrine of Providence, which peculiarly characterizes the purer teaching of Jesus, the gospel according to the Essenes, is true only as a fable for children, allegorizing principles that have to be worked out in a very different form by men amidst the realities of life. It has been aimed to show, that there is no sufficient evidence to prove that Christianity takes a supernatural place in history ; that its early facts, and subsequent diffusion, may be accounted for without miracle ; and that the good it has effected has not been of a kind to separate it from the ordinary course of things. And it has been urged that it will yet accomplish much greater good, when it is regarded simply as a natural means of improvement, and ceases to be encumbered with all those trappings and defences hung about it by superstition, which obstruct its adaptation to the growing wants of mankind.

Summary.

Either this must be the result :—or else, it seems inevitably to follow, we must give up reason entirely as having nothing to do in the matter of religion, as a faculty given us in mockery, and intended merely to be crushed under the Jugghernaut wheels of faith ; we must deliver ourselves blindly up to the guidance of so-called Heaven,—that is to say, in true language, of those bold men who arrogate to themselves the delegated right to rule over, and to trample upon, the prostrate souls of their fellow-men.

SUMMARY.]

Bishop Butler states the plan of his celebrated defence of Christianity as follows :—

"Now the divine government of the world, implied in the notion of religion in general and of Christianity, contains in it; that mankind is appointed to live in a future state; that there every one shall be rewarded or punished; rewarded or punished respectively for all that behaviour here, which we comprehend under the words, virtuous or vicious, morally good or evil: that our present life is a probation, a state of trial, and of discipline, for that future one; notwithstanding the objections, which men may fancy they have, from notions of Necessity, against there being any such moral plan as this at all; and whatever objections may appear to lie against the wisdom and goodness of it, as it stands so imperfectly made known to us at present: that this world being in a state of apostacy and wickedness, and consequently of ruin, and the sense both of their condition and duty being greatly corrupted amongst men, this gave occasion for an additional dispensation of Providence; of the utmost importance; proved by miracles; but containing in it many things appearing to us strange, and not to have been expected; a dispensation of Providence, which is a scheme or system of things; carried on by the mediation of a divine person, the Messiah, in order to the recovery of the world; yet not revealed to all men, nor proved with the strongest possible evidence to all those to whom it is revealed; but only to such a part of mankind, and with such particular evidence, as the wisdom of God thought fit. . The several parts principally objected against in this moral and Christian dispensation, including its scheme, its publication, and the proof which God has afforded us of its truth, are analogous to what is experienced in the constitution and course of Nature, or Providence; the chief objections themselves which are alleged against the former, are no other than what may be alleged with like justness against the latter, where they are found in fact to be inconclusive; and this argument from analogy is in general unanswerable, and undoubtedly of weight on the side of religion, notwithstanding the objections that seem to lie against it, and the real ground which there may be for difference of opinion, as to the particular degree of weight which is to be laid upon it."*

"It is obvious how much advantage the nature of the evidence (for the truth of our religion) gives to those persons who attack Christianity, especially in conversation. For it is easy to show, in a short and lively manner, that such and such things are liable to objection, but impossible to show, in like manner, the united force of the whole argument in one view."†

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* Introduction to the *Analogy*, last paragraph.

† *Analogy*, Part II. ch. VII. last paragraph but one.

PART II.

# CHRISTIANITY AGAINST INFIDELITY.

## OBJECTIONS, ON THE PART OF CHRISTIANITY.

### THAT INFIDELITY IS INDUCED BY A SPIRIT

I.

**Difficulties are admitted by Christians, but accepted as a trial of Humility.**

Butler says, towards the close of his Analogy, "It is most readily acknowledged, that the foregoing treatise is by no means satisfactory; very far indeed from it: but so would any natural institution of life appear, if reduced into a system, together with its evidence."*

"It is undeniable, that the perplexities which uniformly puzzle man in the physical world, and even in the little world of his own mind, when he passes a certain limit, are just as unmanageable as those found in the moral constitution and government of the universe, or in the disclosures of the volume of Revelation. In both we find abundance of inexplicable difficulties; sometimes arising from our absolute ignorance, and perhaps quite as often from our partial knowledge. These difficulties are probably left on the pages of both volumes for some of the same reasons; many of them, it may be, because even the commentary of the Creator himself could not render them plain to a finite understanding, though a necessary and salutary exercise of our humility may be involved in their reception; others, if not purely (which seems not probable) yet partly for the sake of exercising and training that humility, as an essential part of the education of a *child;* others, surmountable, indeed, in the progress of knowledge and by prolonged effort of the human intellect, may be designed to stimulate that intellect to strenuous action and healthy effort—as well as to supply, in their solution, as time rolls on, an ever-accumulating mass of proofs of the profundity of the wisdom which has so far anticipated all the wisdom of man; and of the divine origin of both the great books which he is privileged to study as a pupil, and even to illustrate as a commentator,—but the text of which he cannot alter.

"But, for submitting to us many profound and insoluble problems, the second of the above reasons—the training of the intellect and heart of man to submission to the Supreme Intelligence—would alone be sufficient... Implicit obedience to the dictates of an all-perfect wisdom, exercised amidst many difficulties and perplexities, as so many tests of sincerity, and yet sustained by evidences which justify the conclusions which involve them, would seem to be the great object of man's moral education here; and to vindicate both the partial evidence addressed to his reason, and the abundant difficulties which it leaves to his faith. 'The evidence of

* *Analogy,* Part II. Chap. VIII. Ed. 1839. p. 281.

# PART II.

# CHRISTIANITY AGAINST INFIDELITY.

## ANSWERS, ON THE PART OF INFIDELITY.

### OF PRIDE AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY.

I. Reason and Faith have each their distinct province in the mind; if either interfere with the other, mental confusion and disintegration are the consequence. In the infancy of Intellect, Faith ruled in every department of science as well as theology; but as Reason has worked out knowledge, the domain of Faith has gradually drawn into narrower limits, still, however, retaining, as she must ever retain, an ample sphere for the exercise of the religious sentiments of trust and submission. In proportion as Reason discovers the real bounds of knowledge, the more evident it makes the vast depths of mystery in the presence of which it belongs to Faith to sustain the soul with her gentle assurance. But Christianity has fixed the boundary according to the mental condition of an age gone by. A long precession of ideas has placed the celestial signs in a false position.

The "faith" that is required of us by Butler and his followers, is not with regard to the real mysteries of the constitution and government of the world, but in what, we think, are their own unwarrantable assumptions. They invite reason to the examination of their arguments, but as soon as opposition presses them, they cry out that reason is impious, and *faith* is what is wanted. Our Faith is this, that Reason can never be impious. *Sophistry is always so, but true Reason never.*

We are told that "difficulties" were set before us, *probably*, as a trial of our faith. It may have seemed *probable* to Butler and his followers, but it does not to us. And may we not retort the charge of presumption upon those who thus judge of the *motives* of the Deity?

"The object of the *Analogy* is not to prove the truth of Revelation, but to confirm it, by showing that there is no greater difficulty in the way of believing the religion of Revelation than in believing the religion of Nature. Here, at the outset, the truth of Revelation—*i.e.* the very point to be proved, is assumed. . . He who believes the Scripture to have proceeded from God, is already convinced, and cannot therefore need convincing. The only man who needs an argument is he who does *not* already believe it, and does not believe *because* of the difficulties. The "difficulties" we find in Nature arise from our being unable to trace the train of causation through all its stages. We do not doubt the facts; our difficulties are not external to Nature. But with regard to Revelation, the main difficulties *are* external to the Bible—*i.e.* arise from our

religion,' says Butler, 'is fully sufficient for all the purposes of probation, how far soever it is from being satisfactory as to the purposes of curiosity, or any other: and, indeed, it answers the purposes of the former in several respects, which it would not do if it were as over-bearing as is required.'* Or as Pascal beautifully puts it:†—'There is light enough for those whose sincere wish is to see—and darkness enough to confound those of an opposite disposition.' "‡

II. Perhaps to every Christian who has thought much upon the grounds of his belief, there has come a time, forming the turning-point of his religious life, when these difficulties have pressed upon him with terrible force; and experience has constantly shown, that from this conflict no one has come forth with his faith unscathed, who has relied solely upon his own strength, upon the mere deductions of his own intellect. If, at all risks, he must have his reason satisfied, he cannot be a Christian, since his nature is incapable of that "belief with the heart" which is alone "unto salvation." Reason is inherently self-reliant: as it is well represented in the Bible, that as soon as man obtained the *knowledge* of good and evil, "God said, Behold, the man is become as one of ourselves." With the knowledge, the conscious exercise of his own power of intellect, comes the unwillingness to submit to authority:—it is a centrifugal force, that drives him ever onwards and outwards, unless the centripetal power of love, of faith, hold him to his Creator, and so the two combined cause him to fulfil his proper orbit of mingled duty and freedom. Soon as ever the strength of religious feeling is weakened, the pride of reason exalts itself, and rebels against restraint; the child that no longer loves its parent, breaks loose from the ties that seem to impede its manhood; and if the child wander from its home, under the miserable conceit of its own powers, what is there to deliver it from the destruction into which its baby weakness may cause it to fall?—Christians have been

**The Infidel resents them as an insult to his Reason.**

* *Analogy*, Part II. ch. VIII. p. 282.

† *Pensées*. Faugère's edition, tome II. p. 151.

‡ *Reason and Faith*. Rogers' Essays, pp. 260-2. See also Whately on *The Example of Children as proposed to Christians*.

being unable to believe that God *did* write such a book for such a purpose."*

And the internal difficulties, moral as well as intellectual, are not only incomparably greater than those in nature, but stand on quite different ground. *Here* evil is expressly sanctioned by God; whereas the best theologians are willing to attribute that in nature to some mysterious necessity, in Butler's own words, to "perhaps some impossibilities in the nature of things, which we are unacquainted with."† Evil in nature is something not to be acquiesced in, but to be withstood. If we follow our instincts of morality, we can never be brought to *approve* it; as, in fact, we are required to do by the Divine example offered in Revelation. When Butler thinks it not hard to believe that God commanded theft and murder, because there are inconsistencies with the moral law apparent in nature, he is obliged to explain himself by asserting that it is possible for a Scripture precept to make that which was previously unjust and immoral cease to be so: which, as it appears to us, notwithstanding his argument to the contrary, is clearly setting aside natural morality.‡ We have a command imprinted in our nature, to abhor theft and murder wherever we meet with them; and this we do regard as divine; in this we have reasonable, and therefore implicit faith.——But we have none in the system of doctrine that would require such a course of argument as Butler's to support it. The difficulties in Revelation are to be accounted for by those in Nature; the difficulties in Nature are to be acquiesced in because this life is a probation, a state of discipline for a future one; and we are to believe that there is such a future life because it is—*most likely*:—this is all that Butler professes to show, and he does it upon grounds that are rejected as unsubstantial by his ablest successors in modern times.§ On this tottering apex he rests the whole reversed pyramid of his argument for Divine Revelation: propping up its feeble basis, as he proceeds, with equally unstable material. One assumption that he makes, he states fairly as such, being requisite to his argument, that, namely, of the existence of an intelligent Author and Governor of the world; but he slides in another, on which the whole conception of Revelation turns, as if it needed no explanation:—"the world *being* in a state of apostacy and wickedness, and consequently of ruin"!‖ This is what theologians have been apt to take for granted. They are but beginning to feel that they must try and prove it. Meanwhile, our faith in human nature is unshaken.

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* *Butler's Analogy versus Modern Unbelief*, in the *Leader* for October 30, 1852. See also articles in continuation, November 6, 20, and 27; and correspondence on the same, December 4. † *Analogy*, Part I. ch. II.

‡ *Ibid*, Part II. ch. III. [He argues, that "men have no right to either property or life, but what arises solely from the grant of God: when it is made known that this grant is revoked, it must cease to be unjust to deprive them of either."]

§ See Whately's Essay on *The Revelation of a Future State*. Also, Preliminary Dissertation in Encyclopædia Britannica.

‖ In the Chapter to which the Analysis of the contents of the *Analogy* (see *ante*, Part I. A. 48) refers us, all that is said upon this prime basis of the argument is this:—that Christianity contains a dispensation, "for the recovery and salvation of mankind, *who are represented in Scripture to be in a state of ruin*." Part II. ch. I.

warned in the Word that is still sacred to them, that Pride is the first cause of enmity against God, and the easily-besetting sin that is ever ready to ensnare man to his ruin :—human observation shows also how easily self-reliance degenerates into self-conceit and presumption, and that where these exist the judgment is warped and impervious to the perception of its own errors.

It must then be placed as an accusation and an argument against Infidelity, that it is engendered by, and engenders in its turn, this perilous degree of self-reliance, unbecoming in a frail human being, and inconsistent with a disposition for honouring God. The difficulties which the Christian accepts as a trial to his faith, humbly waiting till farther teaching be vouchsafed, are resented by the unbeliever, who must be a light to himself, who must see and know, and can take nothing upon trust. He thinks Revelation contradicts his reason, that in some respects it runs counter to his moral feelings, and therefore he concludes that Revelation is wrong. His confidence in his own decision, forgetting that man's judgment is always liable to err, his heart to deceive itself, seems preposterous and enormous. Let his arguments be ever so strong, his case seem ever so complete, it is always possible that on some one point he may have been mistaken ; one little link in the chain may have been overlooked that would make all the difference, one shade of circumstance that would set everything in a contrary light. If no flaw were visible anywhere, philosophic modesty would lead a man to suspect himself in such a case, and would not let him *dare* to be certain.* Yet while it is so far otherwise, while there are such manifest symptoms of error in the attacks upon Christianity, that they are made from all possible quarters, so that opposing foes often shoot into one another's mouths, no demur as to the legitimacy of his cause arrests the headlong assailant ;—nay, a man may have to shift his own ground to all points of the compass, and yet be positive still.—*He* is in the right and Christianity is in the wrong. He has proved it. With the might of his own Intellect he has done battle with all the forces of Revelation, esteemed by deluded multitudes the armies of the Lord of Hosts. He has battered down the honoured bulwark of ages past, the tower of strength in which his fathers trusted :—and how can he avoid exulting in the power of his own right arm?

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* Dr. Arnold says: "The man you have been trying to convert...says that he cannot find out God, and that he does not believe in Him ; therefore he renounces His service, and chooses to make a god of himself. Now, the idea of God being no other than a combination of all the highest excellencies that we can conceive, it is so delightful to a good and sound mind, that it is misery to part with it ; and such a mind, if it cannot discern God clearly, concludes that the fault is in itself—that it cannot yet reach to God, not that God does not exist. You see there must be an assumption in either case, for the thing does not admit of demonstration, and the assumption that God is, or is not, depends on the degree of moral pain, which a man feels in relinquishing the idea of God. And here, I think, is the moral fault of unbelief :—that a man can bear to make so great a moral sacrifice, as is implied in renouncing God." *Life of Arnold,* 3d Ed. 1844. Vol. I. p. 314.

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II. Christianity has been so long associated with all the best feelings of mankind, that it seems impossible its separation should be effected without doing some violence to them. That is to say, the Christianity which represents God as the loving Father of his creatures: for with regard to the harsher features of Calvinism, it is the moral feelings which are the first to resist the outrage put upon them:—but the total abnegation of Revelation must be at least initiated by those in whom the mind is stronger than the heart. For inflicting pain that seems to it necessary and salutary, reason can vindicate itself only by proving itself in the right; and the feelings, if, after they have subsided from the agitation of the shock, they cannot acquiesce in the decision of reason, have a right to make their protest attended to, and to prove it, if they can, in the wrong.

Infidels are accused of making a god of their own Intellect, and worshipping it. If they do, they are abusing a faculty, as all idolatry is abuse. If they ignore and try to extinguish the religious instincts of our nature, their system is false, and will speedily be itself extinct. But there can be no idolatry in an unreserved homage to Truth, and in the sacrifice to it of all prejudices however bound about the heart. The faith, the religion, of "infidels" is, that Truth must always be in the right.

But it is held to be the peculiar mark of self-estimation and self-love, to regard and follow our reason. The "Pride of Reason" has always been represented as the sign of rebellion against religion, against God. This is because, as it seems to us, religion has been always hitherto framed without the aid of reason. And not only is it because it has raised up for itself fantastic unrealities which reason must necessarily destroy, that the latter is its natural antagonist; but also because it has been mainly based upon that emotional and sensational part of our nature, over which reason feels its own prerogative to hold the mastery; so that the office of reason in its opposition to religion ought not to be regarded as the rebellion of egoism against submission to superior authority, (—to resist superior wisdom is the mark of idiocy, not of reason,—) but as the claim of the higher Self against the vehement assertion of the lower Self. Religion has hitherto been the product chiefly of the latter. It sprang up in early barbarous ages, the growth partly of superstitious terrors, partly of craving desires for all kinds of personal enjoyments, partly of moral aspirations groping uncertainly for something more excellent than was yet perceptible; while reason was still too feeble to control, to guide, to enlighten the mind.* It has been grossly sensual, abjectly servile, exclusively selfish; until reason, with benevolence, has come in to refine and elevate it, lifting it out of the sphere of mere individual hopes and fears, giving it generosity, poetry, an open eye for nature, an enlarged thought for the wonders of science. Reason and benevolence have always worked well together, twin influences which Nature befriends; reason and religion have been in conflict, because the latter has been allied with the selfish instincts which the former, in proportion as it is pure and noble, strives to subdue. To seek its own salvation, is the object of the soul under the influence of religion; to help forward the work of improvement for the good of all, is what reason prescribes. Even the love of God is as

* See Parker's *Discourse of Matters pertaining to Religion.*

III.

Pride of Reason is not far from Pride of one's own Reason.

Self-confidence and self-assertion are notoriously characteristic of unbelievers. They are men who rely upon Intellect, because their own either is, or they think it to be, unusually clear and penetrating; while, *as a general rule*, they despise the religious emotions because their own are weak and easily suppressed. They are men who find it hard to understand, because they do not *feel*, the need of a Saviour, the sweet dependence of leaning upon an Almighty Father's love. They believe they can do without it; and they glorify themselves upon their independence. Reason is by its nature sufficient to itself. And from trusting to Reason generally, the step is easy to trusting in their *own* reason. It is besides too strong a temptation to self-love to feel oneself wiser than one's fellows, to see through their mistakes, to show the originality of genius by striking out a new path, and superior strength of character by being able to tread it alone. It is too inviting to vanity to stand up and make oneself conspicuous, wondered at, even to be abused, for the sake of notoriety. These appear to be attractions to the large number of the *open* opponents of Christianity. As for those who disbelieve or doubt in secret,—anxiously, regretfully, mistrustingly,—they are objects only of compassion and sympathy to the sincere Christian. But it is difficult not to suppose that there is some desire of personal distinction serving as a stimulus to the overbearing zeal of those, who can attack publicly a faith so venerable, so bound up with all that is precious to multitudes of their fellow-beings; enriched with the accumulated wisdom of ages, endeared by the loving profession of an innumerable brotherhood of the best of men.

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of a personification of the soul's own ideal, composed of the human attributes in which it has depicted him; of One who belongs to it, and represents all that it delights in and longs for in Infinite perfection:* while reason, coldly but faithfully, sees that infinite gratification is not appropriate to human beings.—There is no humility in believing that man is a "fallen" being, since it is only to exalt the intrinsic greatness of his nature; and it is a childish magnifying of self-importance, to represent the salvation of man as the main object of Divine solicitude. There is much more modesty of conception in believing ourselves but one with the rest of nature,—a part of the Whole.

III. "And here I complain, that men put Falsehood for Truth, in charging *presumption* and *audacity* on those who shrink from investing a human book or a human person with divine honours. To take on ourselves the responsibility of avowing that all the words bound up between certain lids are Absolute Truth,—to guarantee all the consequences that follow from such a dogma,—*this* is extremely audacious; as every one at once feels it if applied to any new example. The audacity and presumption of bidding men to run all risks of pernicious error, in accepting the words of a book as *all* divine, certainly is not obviated by the fact that the book is old and foreign, and its origin thereby somewhat obscured."†

"The pursuit of truth is easy to a man who has no human sympathies, whose vision is impaired by no fond partialities, whose heart is torn by no divided allegiance. To him the renunciation of error presents few difficulties; for the moment it is recognised as error, its charm ceases. But the case is very different with the Searcher whose affections are strong, whose associations are quick, whose hold upon the Past is clinging and tenacious. He may love Truth with an earnest and paramount devotion; but he loves much else also. He loves errors, which were once the cherished convictions of his soul. He loves dogmas which were once full of strength and beauty to his thoughts, though now perceived to be baseless or fallacious. He loves the church where he worshipped in his happy childhood; where his friends and his family worship still; where his grey-haired parents await the resurrection of the Just; but WHERE *he* can worship and await no more. He loves the simple old creed, which was the creed of his earlier and brighter days; which is the creed of his wife and children still; but which inquiry has compelled him to abandon. The past and the familiar have chains and talismans which hold him back in his career, till every fresh step forward becomes an effort and an agony; every fresh error discovered is a fresh bond snapped asunder; every new glimpse of light is like a fresh flood of pain poured in upon the soul. To such a man the pursuit of Truth is a daily martyrdom—how hard and bitter let the martyr tell. Shame to those who make it doubly so; honour to those who encounter it saddened, weeping, trembling, but unflinching still."‡

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* See Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*, passim.

† Preface to the third edition of *The Soul*, by F. W. Newman, p. XI. Chapman's *Library for the People*. No. IV.

‡ Preface to the *Creed of Christendom*, by W. R. Greg. 1851. p. XVI.

IV.

**Otherwise unbelief would content itself with Silence.**

If the Infidel seek no self-glorification in the demolition of Christianity, why cannot he leave it to God to destroy it himself, as He surely will, if it be not His own work? Or, more strictly to speak to him in his own language, why not leave it to the operation of the natural course of events to bring to nought that which if false must necessarily perish of its own accord? Silently, gradually, far more mercifully, thus the work would be accomplished. Tender feelings would be spared, old institutions, that have confessedly some good in them, would live out their time, till new and better, if such there be, should be ready to take their place. Surely this is what a reverence for Nature and benevolence to man would suggest, if the impatient forwardness of irritable egoism did not thrust private convictions upon public notice, and by this self-gratification spread the infection of doubt and dismay amidst the unprepared multitudes.

THAT INFIDELITY IS INDUCED BY THE DESIRE

V.

**It refuses an AuthoritativeLaw of Morality.**

The principle of the Infidel is that he is a law to himself. As, in the Pride of Reason, he rebels against faith upon authority, so does he naturally resent any external restriction upon his moral and sensational nature. As his Intellect craves dominion for itself in the sphere of understanding, so do all his impulses of feeling and passion demand their free operation and full gratification;—to be held in check indeed by worldly prudence, and not to be permitted to become an offence to fellow-beings;* but without being subjected to any law of restraint imposed as the expression of the Divine Will:—that is to say, that man himself, and not his Maker, is to be the judge how far his passions and sensual desires are well to be indulged.

Our principle is that man's whole nature needs to be in a state of voluntary subjection to Divine control. To calculate "what will produce the greatest happiness to the greatest number," serves very well as an effort towards abstract theory, but can never be really accomplished with man's limited means of knowledge, nor if it could would it avail for the practical direction of conscience. When a man is called upon to act in emergencies, he must not have to argue and balance amidst conflicting and importunate motives and temptations, but he must have an authoritative *law;* not a law made by himself or his fellow-mortals, which himself is always free to abrogate, but one given from above him, based on his religion, and sanctioned by express demonstration of Divine Wisdom, and of Divine Power for its enforcement.

* See *Social Statics,* by Herbert Spencer. 1851. p. 77.

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IV. There is a current sophism, that "though Christianity be not true, yet there is *no harm* in believing it,—it is erring *on the safe side*,"—as if safety could ever consist in falsehood. It is the first principle of philosophy, that there is no error that is not pernicious; if it were only for taking up the room of truth. But there is no truth or error that is purely speculative, and that has not its positive practical consequences, much less religious truth or error. When, as is now the case, old faith is daily degenerating into hypocrisy, it is evident that all morality associated with it must be vitiated also, and poison be infused into the very springs of the soul. To profess to receive as religion what is secretly recognized as false, is demoralizing to the whole nature.

"In general: *wherever religion places itself in contradiction with reason, it places itself also in contradiction with the moral sense.* Only with the sense of truth co-exists the sense of the right and good. Depravity of understanding is always depravity of heart. He who deludes and cheats his understanding, has not a veracious, honourable heart; sophistry corrupts the whole man."*——Therefore, the "Infidel" may well be animated by a pure and honest zeal in speaking forth the truth that he thinks to be in him.

TO ESCAPE FROM MORAL RESTRAINT.

V. It would be difficult to find language clearer and stronger than that of Butler, to express the capability of man to be *a law to himself:* "Nothing can be more evident, than that, exclusive of revelation, man cannot be considered as a creature left by his Maker to act at random, and live at large up to the extent of his natural power, as passion, humour, wilfulness, happen to carry him; which is the condition brute creatures are in: but that, *from his make, constitution, or nature, he is in the strictest and most proper sense a law to himself.* He hath the rule of right within: what is wanting is only that he honestly attend to it. The inquiries which have been made by men of leisure after some general rule, the conformity to, or disagreement from which, should denominate our actions good or evil, are in many respects of great service. Yet let any plain honest man, before he engages in any course of action, ask himself, Is this I am going about right, or is it wrong? Is it good, or is it evil? I do not in the least doubt, but that this question would be answered agreeably to truth and virtue, by almost any fair man in almost any circumstance. Neither do there appear any cases which look like exceptions to this; but those of superstition and of partiality to ourselves... But allowing that mankind hath the rule of right within himself, yet it may be asked, 'What obligations are we under to attend to and follow it?' I answer: it has been proved that man by his nature is a law to himself, without the particular distinct consideration of the positive sanctions of that law; the rewards and punishments which we feel, and those which from the light of reason we have ground to believe, are annexed

* Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*, p. 244.

"Some authors of great and distinguished merit, have, I think, expressed themselves in a manner, which may occasion some danger, to careless readers, of imagining the whole of virtue to consist in singly aiming, according to the best of their judgment, at promoting the happiness of mankind in the present state; and the whole of vice, in doing what they foresee, or might foresee, is likely to produce an overbalance of unhappiness in it: than which mistakes, none can be conceived more terrible. For it is certain, that some of the most shocking instances of injustice... may, in many supposable cases, not have the appearance of being likely to produce an overbalance of misery in the present state; perhaps sometimes may have the contrary appearance... The happiness of the world is the concern of him who is the lord and the proprietor of it: nor do we know what we are about, when we endeavour to promote the good of mankind in any ways, but those which he has directed; that is indeed in all ways not contrary to veracity and justice."*

Butler argues powerfully that we have natural instincts to discern between virtue and vice; but the authority of these depends upon their being the writing of God upon our hearts. Paley also, who makes the "right" synonymous with the "expedient", while he supposes it only discoverable by men as the result of experience, makes it in its essence identical with the Will of God.† Its derivation from God is what gives its authority to morality in the view of the Christian,—who also sees the necessity, in the degenerate state of human nature, for a confirmation and additional sanction to it by Revelation;—while the Infidel, on the contrary, confines his view of morality to human nature, resting upon the "nature of things", and making it as cold a science as any in physics. Many indeed, not professed Atheists, say in words, that "duty means fulfilment of the Divine Will",‡ but the whole tendency of their writings shews that they use Deity merely as an adjective to express their estimated quality of the abstract order of things,—their own judgment being of course the sole standard of approbation,—which is a real abnegation of Deity. *The Infidel says, the rule of nature is divine because it is* RIGHT; *the Christian says, it is right because it is* DIVINE. It is this religious view of morality only which can make it truly and efficiently act upon the heart. It must be held, not the deduction of reason, but the positive command of God. Morality can be a vital principle only when it is felt to spring from a Living Source.§

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* Butler's *Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue,* near the end.

† *Moral Philosophy.* Book II. ch. IV. "To inquire what is the will of God becomes the whole business of morality. There are two methods of coming at this: I. by his express declarations, where they are to be had, and which must be sought for in Scripture. II. by what we can discover of his designs and disposition from his works, *i.e.* from the light of nature; and the method of coming at the will of God by the latter, is to inquire into the tendency of any action to promote or diminish the general happiness."

‡ *Social Statics,* p. 76. § [This view is so clearly expressed in the following

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to it. The question then carries its own answer along with it. Your obligation to obey this law, is its being the law of your nature. That your conscience approves of and attests to such a course of action, is itself alone an obligation. Conscience does not only offer itself to show us the way we should walk in, but it likewise carries its own authority with it, that it is our natural guide; the guide assigned us by the Author of our nature: it therefore belongs to our condition of being, it is our duty to walk in that path, and follow this guide, without looking about to see whether we may not possibly forsake them with impunity."*

A man who entertains such a noble idea of human nature as this, and who makes it, as Butler does, the main substratum of all his belief,—the great reality, the known fact, by which all doctrinal theories are to be tested,—is already a denier of Christianity at heart. He does *not* believe that man is by nature corrupt, and in a state of alienation from God: and, accordingly, he does not *really* feel the need of a revelation: nor can he, therefore, ever be really convinced that it has taken place.†

But the need for a general rule of duty is stated with greater force, when it is taken into consideration, that the constitution of *all* men is not found in experience to be such as to direct them instinctively aright. Hence the moral sense that is to serve for an unerring guide, must be the aggregate sense of mankind; which has to be gathered by long observation and reflection, and then to be reduced to simple principles. It cannot be said that this has yet been done; men are only feeling their way towards it; and they are obstructed in so doing by the arbitrary rules laid down in the name of religion. The science of morality has to be collected by degrees like all other science; as each step is carefully verified by experience, it will acquire certainty as great as that which belongs to the world of matter. And in proportion as it gains this certainty, and is recognized as universal, grand, and reliable truth, admiration for it springs up within the soul, and it becomes to it Divine. It is no matter of private, individual feeling; it is the essence, the sublimation of the feeling of entire humanity. The power of moral feeling will thus be indefinitely exalted; nor can that be a cold science which, instead of ignoring, raises feeling from a caprice into an immutable principle. And for its authority, what can be greater than that of known truth? When the law of moral consequences is recognized as fixed and absolute, the hope to escape from it would be as great madness as to resist the law of gravitation.

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* *Upon Human Nature.* Sermon III. pp. 48, 49.

† "A serious apprehension that Christianity may be true" (*Analogy*, last page) seems all that Butler thinks is to be attained. "The question," he says, Part II. ch. VIII., "is not at all whether the evidence of religion be satisfactory; but whether it be, in reason, sufficient to prove and discipline that virtue which it presupposes": thus making its adaptation to human nature the ultimate, and in fact the only test of its truth,—which is all that any opponent of Revelation would require. But Butler shows a want of faith in the power both of Divine truth and of human veracity, when he supposes that the doubtful surmise of the possible truth of Christianity to be attained by accepting all the assumptions and evasions on which his own argument depends, can obtain from men "a regard not the same exactly, but in many respects nearly the same, with what a full conviction of its truth would lay them under." (*Analogy*, last page.)

VI.

Much more the Christian law, which demands subjugation of the entire nature.

Christianity gives a needed enforcement to the natural law of Morality, by the new motive it awakens of Love to God, and by its promise of a future life of retribution: —but it also does more. It opens principles of a far more profound and elevated character than belong to the moral feelings of which the seeds are already implanted in humanity. Its design is not merely to make man perfect in his own nature, but to raise him above it. He was given first a constitution to fit him to be a denizen of this world; but Christianity is to make him an heir of immortality. In Christ he becomes a new creature, and must rise above the world and his own worldly self.——Revelation has been given in successive stages, as mankind were prepared for it. There may well be believed to have been a primæval one, since it is otherwise unaccountable how the all but universal idea of religion should have been attained in the barbarous infant state of the world; of which the trace is called by us the natural law of religion and morality.* Sustained by this, man was never left a prey to those temptations of the flesh which resulted from the animal propensities given to him as necessary to maintain his corporeal existence, while at the same time he was left free in his power to indulge them, as a trial of his virtue. Under the Mosaic dispensation, while mankind was still in a state of childhood, a law of express commandment was given, with temporal rewards and penalties attached to it. But in the new covenant of Grace, intended for those who should attain the full stature of men in Christ Jesus, a higher measure of obligation was unfolded. Under this they should no longer be subject to mere law; but by faith be exalted into that union with God which raises above the necessity for law,—makes them, like God, superior to law. The whole law is already fulfilled, and merged in Love, to the soul that has by faith become one with God. Faith has overcome the world. This new power which supersedes, not by opposition to, but by the complete fulfilment of, Law, acts by diminishing the desires which are the source of temptation. Hence Christians are no longer taught like the Israelites, by express prohibitions of particular heinous sins:—it is now shown them that the whole body must be brought under subjection, since they must love God with all their

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sentence, by a writer whose opinions nevertheless generally rank with those of Infidels, that it may be quoted on this side:]

"No ethical conceptions are possible at all,—except as floating shreds of unattached thought— without a religious background: and the sense of responsibility, the agony of shame, the inner reverence for justice, first find their meaning and vindication in a supreme holiness that rules the world. Nor can any one be penetrated with the distinction between right and wrong, without recognizing it as valid for all free beings, and incapable of local and arbitrary change. His feeling insists on its permanent recognition and omnipresent sway: and this unity in the Moral Law carries him to the unity of the Divine Legislator. Theism is thus the indispensable postulate of conscience,—its objective counterpart and justification, without which its inspirations would be illusions, and its veracities themselves a lie." Article on *English Religion: its origin and present types*, in Westminster Review, IX. January 1854, p. 75.

* Butler's *Analogy*, Part I. ch. VI. p. 144.

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VI. *Mankind*, then, "hath the rule of right within itself: what is wanting is only that men attend honestly to it." This rule is sure and sufficient. All that goes beyond it seems to us unnecessary, false, and pernicious. Therefore we fully admit the charge of rebelling against all that part of Christian doctrine which aims to make out of us other beings than we are. Our present duty is with the present world; for that our constitution is fitted, and would *not* be fitted if a portion of it were suppressed, out of regard to a future unknown state of things.

"But this rule of right," it may be said, "though ascertained and fixed by universal consent, would still be wanting in the crowning motive of morality—love towards God. The philosophic moralist can only say, you are happier on the whole for sacrificing a part of your happiness; or, in an enlarged view, it is consistent with order, and the good of the whole, that you should sacrifice yourself or a part of yourself: but he who loves God, feels that love inspiring all he does; he asks no other motive, and no other recompense; it is not the command of authority, but the necessity of his deepest and highest nature that he obeys."—It is certainly a better motive to obey from love, than from a regard to reward or punishment awaiting ourselves; but, as it seems to us, a still purer motive than love to a Person, is the love of Right for its own sake; deduced from a consideration of the consequences that will affect not self alone, but mankind in general. The highest idea of Deity is that of Abstract Right. In proportion as it sinks into that of a Person, who must necessarily have human attributes, and only thus can become properly an object of love, superstition begins to degrade the idea, and to make of God only an Infinite Egoism.

"So far as God is regarded as separate from man, as an individual being, so far are duties to God separated from duties to man:—faith is, in the religious sentiment, separated from morality, from love. Let it not be replied that faith in God is faith in love, in goodness itself; and that thus faith is itself an expression of a morally good disposition. In the idea of personality, ethical definitions vanish; they are only collateral things, mere accidents. The chief thing is the subject, the divine *Ego*. Love to God himself, since it is love to a personal being, is not a moral but a personal love. Innumerable devout hymns breathe nothing but love to the Lord; but in this love there appears no spark of an exalted moral idea or disposition.—Faith is the highest to itself, because its object is a divine personality. Hence it makes salvation dependent on itself, not on the fulfilment of common human duties. But that which has eternal salvation as its consequence, necessarily becomes in the mind of man the chief thing. As therefore inwardly morality is subordinate to faith, so it must also be outwardly, practically subordinate, nay sacrificed, to faith. It is inevitable that there should be actions in which faith exhibits itself in distinction from morality, or rather in contradiction with it;—actions which are morally bad, but which according to faith are laudable, because they have in view the advantage of faith. All salvation depends on faith:

strength. Even those gratifications of sense which in a worldly meaning are innocent, cannot be indulged in with enjoyment for their own sake, without interfering with the higher pleasures and the eternal welfare of the soul. The true Christian must count all but loss for the sake of Christ; he must feel that friendship with the world is enmity with God. Even the best of his earthly affections must not be freely yielded to, but all must be held in subordination to the heavenly love. And, paradoxical as it may sound, but manifesting the consistency of the Divine ordinations, it is in fact only when he has thus learned to cast the world under his feet, and to despise its pleasures, that he is first able really to enjoy it. In the serenity of his mind, fixed upon immutable good, he can partake of the passing indulgences that bestrew his path below, mementoes of Divine beneficence, without being agitated by eager desires, and fear of loss, or dread of any kind of earthly deprivation, which has become to him of so small account: showing that, by his very denial of self and the world, the Christian has the promise and the possession of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.——But this is inconceivable, this is doctrine too hard for the *natural* man, who has no sublime motive to lift him above the things that perish. He resents the limitation of his present enjoyments, and will not endure that the free exercise of all his powers should be curtailed by the Will of a superior Being, under a penalty for disobedience. Sorely is he tempted by all his animal instincts, by all his greediness of worldly pleasure, by even his better feelings, his love of family and friends, his love of learning and of art, all which, though good and ennobling in an inferior degree, are apt to become inordinate and induce an engrossing attachment to temporal things;—sorely is the natural man tempted by all these, to find out that the prohibition laid upon his pleasures is without authority, that there is a flaw in the document, a forgery in the signature.

VII.

**Without religion man's sensual nature gains predominance.**

Thus the main strength of the opposition to Christianity lies in the sensual nature of man. Where the Pride of Reason slays its thousands, the love of pleasure slays its tens of thousands. For Religion, and Religion alone, places upon it that effectual check which it revolts against. The principle of the Infidel is *Freedom of Self-development*, and

it follows that all again depends on the salvation of faith. If faith is endangered, eternal salvation and the honour of God are endangered. Hence faith absolves from every thing; for, strictly considered, it is the sole subjective good in man, as God is the sole good and positive being:—the highest commandment therefore is: Believe!" "Faith does indeed make man happy; but thus much is certain: it infuses into him no really moral dispositions. If it ameliorate man, if it have moral dispositions as its consequence, this proceeds solely from the inward conviction of the irreversible reality of morals:—a conviction independent of religious faith. It is morality alone, and by no means faith, that cries out in the conscience of the believer,—thy faith is nothing, if it does not make thee good. It is not to be denied that the assurance of eternal salvation, the forgiveness of sins, the sense of favour and release from all punishment, inclines man to do good. The man who has this confidence possesses all things; he is happy; he becomes indifferent to the good things of this world; no envy, no avarice, no ambition, no sensual desire, can enslave him; everything earthly vanishes in the prospect of heavenly grace and eternal bliss. But in him good works do not proceed from essentially virtuous dispositions. It is not love, not the object of love, man, the basis of all morality, which is the motive of his good works. No! he does good not for the sake of goodness itself, not for the sake of man, but for the sake of God;—out of gratitude to God, who has done all for him, and for whom therefore he must on his side do all that lies in his power. He forsakes sin, because it wounds God, his Saviour, his Benefactor. The idea of virtue is here the idea of compensatory sacrifice. God has sacrificed himself for man; therefore man must sacrifice himself to God. The greater the sacrifice, the better the deed. The more anything contradicts man and Nature, the greater the abnegation, the greater is the virtue. This merely negative idea of goodness has been especially realized and developed by Catholicism. Its highest moral idea is that of sacrifice; hence the high significance attached to the denial of sexual love,—to virginity. Chastity, or rather virginity, is the characteristic virtue of the Catholic faith,—for this reason, that it has no basis in Nature. It is the most fanatical, transcendental, fantastical virtue, the virtue of the supranaturalistic faith;—to faith, the highest virtue, but in itself no virtue at all. Thus faith makes that a virtue which intrinsically, substantially, is no virtue: it has therefore no sense of virtue; it must necessarily depreciate true virtue, because it so exalts a merely apparent virtue, because it is guided by no idea but that of the negation, the contradiction of human nature."*

VII. "The aspect in which the Positive Philosophy presents man is as favourable to his moral discipline, as it is fresh and stimulating to his intellectual taste. We find ourselves suddenly living and moving in the midst of the universe,—as a part of it, and not as its aim and object. We find ourselves living, not under capricious and arbitrary conditions, unconnected with the constitution and movements of the whole, but under

* *Essence of Christianity*, pp. 258-261.

in practice this is evidently liable to become chiefly the indulgence of that portion of self which is always most importunate for gratification. Reason is powerless to hold the mastery over those unruly passions which have once been permitted to assert themselves. But in fact the natural course of Infidelity shows that the *attempt* at such mastery by reason, if made at all, is soon abandoned, as in consistency it must. It is not merely as a reckless antidote to despair that the Infidel says in his heart, "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die,"—and it is impossible that in some manner and in some degree this feeling should not arise in the breast of every unbeliever, whether confessed to himself or not;—but he argues too, "It is as lawful for me to eat and drink as to act out any other impulse of my nature, as, for instance, to spend my life in laborious benevolence: —*all the impulses of nature are lawful and good alike.*"

VIII.

Hence lax notions about marriage.

This open setting forth of the right to sensual indulgence, (happily not carried out by all unbelievers,) can hardly be denied to be the ordinary consequence of their principles—or want of principles. It shows itself eminently with regard to the subject of most vital importance in practical morality, of marriage, on the estimation of which the abandonment of religious restraint acts immediately and inevitably: for reverence for the sanctity of the marriage-tie is founded upon religion, and falls with it. Infidelity is almost invariably associated with loose notions as to the nature of the union contracted between husband and wife.

IX.

Infidelity leads to wild social projects.

Neither is it a mere vulgar prejudice that classes together Infidels with Socialists and Communists. Those who have shaken off the bonds of faith in Christianity, are open to, and mostly greedy for, the wildest speculations of all kinds. They are eager for the vindication of their personal rights; but also there is a sense of individual weakness, now especially that they have, as it were, cut themselves off from God, that makes them cling to their fellow-men. They have given up the doctrine that satisfied man's individuality by showing that every soul is precious in the sight of its Maker; they have relinquished the claim to belong to the communion of God's saints: and the demand of their nature both for personal recognition and social union, craves its satisfaction in their immediate condition. They

great, general, invariable laws, which operate on us as a part of the whole. Certainly, I can conceive of no instruction so favourable to aspiration as that which shows us how great are our faculties, how small our knowledge, how sublime the heights to which we may hope to attain, and how boundless an infinity may be assumed to spread out beyond. We find here indications in passing of the evils we suffer from our low aims, our selfish passions, and our proud ignorance; and in contrast with them, animating displays of the beauty and glory of the everlasting laws, and of the sweet serenity, lofty courage, and noble resignation that are the natural consequence of pursuits so pure, and aims so true, as those of Positive Philosophy. Pride of intellect surely abides with those who insist on belief without evidence, and on a philosophy derived from their own intellectual action, without material and corroboration from without, and not with those who are too scrupulous and too humble to transcend evidence, and to add, out of their own imaginations, to that which is, and may be, referred to other judgments. If it be desired to extinguish presumption, to draw away from low aims, to fill life with worthy occupations and elevating pleasures, and to raise human hope and human effort to the highest attainable point, it seems to me that the best resource is the pursuit of Positive Philosophy, with its train of noble truths and irresistible inducements. The prospects it opens are boundless; for among the laws it establishes that of human progress is conspicuous. The virtues it fosters are all those of which Man is capable; and the noblest are those which are more eminently fostered. The habit of truth-seeking and truth-speaking, and of true dealing with self and with all things, is evidently a primary requisite; and this habit once perfected, the natural conscience, thus disciplined, will train up all other moral attributes to some equality with it."*

VIII. The utility of legislative restrictions upon private conduct is at present chiefly denied, not by those who make light of moral principle, but by those who place the strongest reliance upon its force. With regard to marriage, Wilhelm von Humboldt says, "Experience frequently convinces us, that just where law has imposed no fetters, morality most surely binds; the idea of external coercion is one entirely foreign to an institution which, like matrimony, reposes only on inclination and an inward sense of duty."† Religion has its proper function in strengthening this moral principle; but when it is made to give its sanction to human law, it only serves to render it incapable of amelioration. Marriage union can never be perfect while human beings are imperfect. The only means to improve *it*, is to improve *them*; which cannot be done by legal enactments. If, nevertheless, social regulations with respect to marriage are thought necessary,—as they are at present, by all except extreme theorists,—they must at least be made with a regard to human imperfection, and, in order that they may be wisely adapted to it, must be left open to re-adjustment and modification

* *The Positive Philosophy* of Auguste Comte, freely translated and condensed by Harriet Martineau. Translator's Preface, pp. XIV. XV. 1856. Chapman's Quarterly Series, Nos. III. IV.

† Quoted in the Westminster Review, October, 1854. p. 485. Article on *The Sphere and Duties of Government.*

must have what they want here and now. Let them only possess their own birth-rights, and they will make a heaven upon earth for themselves!—What should hinder them from working out their own devices?—Since they have not respected the most venerable of all institutions, no others are sacred to them. Civil government, the rights of property,—all that stands in their way must be overthrown. Every thing becomes the theme of discussion; social order hangs upon a rotten thread, swayed by every caprice of popular opinion; and if the license of thought and of selfish impulse grow into thorough licentiousness of character, and of actual deed, it is but the consummation to be expected.

X.

It gives up all ideas of Moral Responsibility.

Consequent upon the breaking up of the ideas of Divine Law, and a Divine system of retribution, is the abandonment of all proper sense of moral obligation and responsibility. There is no feeling now that man's obedience is due as a mark of gratitude to the Creator, who when he called him into being gave him an immortal soul, dear to Himself, in charge to keep unpolluted by the world until he shall be required to render up an account of it. The Infidel finds himself in existence, he knows not whence or wherefore; accident, or, if he be a logical necessarian, the fixed law of Fate, gave him a place in the world. "His character is formed *for* him, not *by* him"*—formed for him, not by God, but by *circumstances*. His crimes are the result of his organization, that being also the effect of circumstances before his birth. He is a mere machine, mechanically framed by the laws of Nature, mechanically acting himself. Merit or demerit are mere names applied to certain actions to denote their character, but without real meaning, since man is not properly the subject either of praise or blame, nor consequently of reward or punishment, otherwise than as these are the necessary consequence of his actions. Repentance and remorse are ideas utterly abjured and ignored.—It is evident that these doctrines, however professed in words, and abstrusely argued, never have been, and never can be, practically acted on: but they can pervert the mind. At all events, it must be urged against this irreligious Necessarianism, that its outward, striking features are manifestly at variance with morality; it stands patent, at least to vulgar apprehension, as a bold excuse for sin:—and as such is attractive to all those whose base inclinations shrink from the faithful castigation of conscience and religion.

* See the works of Robert Owen, *passim*.

FROM MORAL RESTRAINT.]

according to enlightened experience. But when the stamp of religion, or rather of the *priesthood*, is affixed to those human interpretations of the law of marriage, they are sealed up against all amendment, and the possibility of being brought into conformity with reason and nature; and thus the legal enactment itself is made answerable for the crimes and sufferings attendant both upon the attempted obedience to it, and the open defiance of it. In both cases, the guilt of some, and the martyrdom of others, is the necessary consequence:—martyrdom in the case of defiance, because public opinion has to be resisted until by this means it is brought to a better appreciation of the subject. Meantime, it is indeed true, that in this resistance, there is apt to be a reactionary relaxation of principle, that may be deplorably productive of immorality.

IX. In like manner, the religious sanction given to political principles has kept them back from the influence of progressive civilization. Happily, the idea of the "divine right of kings" is fast becoming exploded; but much political superstition remains, which has to be violently broken away from. In the various social schemes which must then arise, the only danger to be feared, is from the sudden reaction after despotic oppression, and from the want of that discipline of mind and character that can result only from political independence and enlightened education.

X. "Man is responsible in the only way in which responsibility could be of any use. The Creator has attached it in the shape of inevitable pain, moral or physical, to every breach of his laws, moral or physical. . . The expression of praise or blame is necessary and proper, although a man could in no case act otherwise than he did under the circumstances; for approbation and disapproval act as motives. . If there were no necessary connection between motives and actions, if a man might refuse or not to be guided by the former, then, indeed, all praise and blame would be useless."*

It is undeniable that the Christian view of obedience as a *debt* to God, a mark of love to him, and an appointed condition of obtaining eternal happiness, furnishes peculiarly powerful motives, the loss of which natural religion appears at first inadequate to replace. But the motives of the latter, if they are less stimulating to the emotional nature and personal feelings of men, are more steady in their certain operation, and more disinterested in their principle. To believe that well-doing is really the best for man,—to seek the truth, and to act up to the truth possessed, with faith in it, and for the love of it,—this is a rule of life sufficient for a noble heart, without needing any external enforcement. It is to *conscience* that man is responsible; conscience, which is the expression of his personal desire—which demands it as a debt of satisfaction to his own nature—to contribute to the action of that great principle of Justice and Right, which is the best thing he knows, the most beautiful and venerable, the only source of real good to man, and which therefore is to him Divine.

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* *Philosophy of Necessity*, Vol. I. pp. 177, 179, 180.

THAT THE PRINCIPLE ON WHICH

LEAVES NO SUFFICIENT GROUND FOR BELIEVING

XI.

The moral need of man demanded revelation.

The sense of the insufficiency of the means of knowledge afforded by nature to satisfy the moral need of man, was that which led the way for the reception of revelation; and it was only when thus explained and vindicated that a true religion of nature,—*i.e.* a moral religion and not a mere superstitious wonder at physical phenomena,—first became possible. But the opponents and defenders of Christianity alike have been apt to forget this true genesis of the religion that is now called *natural;* and have taken as the assumed *basis* of their arguments, that which is in fact the *result* to be obtained by them, namely, the Moral Government of the World by God: —which was no other than a vague conception, until Christianity gave it the strength of an assured belief. The difficulties of nature have driven men to revelation; there they have been met, not by explanation, but by a demand on faith,—by Divine Promises,—above all, by the assertion, the *proof,* that *God may be trusted.* So far from clearing up all difficulties to reason, Christianity has similar ones of its own; and those who, on account of them, reject its all-sufficient compensatory assurance, are thrown back upon the perplexities of Nature without hope of solution.

XII.

Moral difficulties in nature, are as great as in Revelation. The Christian and the Atheist are alone consistent.

"The Christian speaks on this wise:—'I find, in reference to Christianity as in reference to Theism, what appears to me an immense preponderance of evidence of various kinds in favour of its truth; but both alike, I find, involved in many difficulties which I acknowledge to be insurmountable, and in many mysteries which I cannot fathom. I believe the conclusions *in spite* of them. As to the revelation, I see some of its discrepancies are the effect of transcription and corruption; others are the result of omissions of one or more of the writers which, if supplied, would show that they are apparent only; of others I can suggest no explanations at all; and, over and above these, I see difficulties of *doctrine* which I can no more profess to solve than I can the *parallel* perplexities in Nature and Providence, and especially those involved in the permitted phenomenon of an infinity of physical and moral evil. As to these difficulties, I simply submit to them, because I think the rejection of the evidence for the truths which they embarrass would involve me in a much greater difficulty. With regard to many of the difficulties, in *both* cases, I see that the progress of knowledge and science is continually tending to dissipate some, and to diminish, if not remove, the weight of others: I see that a dawning light

CHRISTIANITY IS REJECTED,

IN A MORAL GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD.

XI. "Whilst nature was imperfectly understood, and the intellectual powers were but little cultivated, the many felt themselves incapable, by means of their own native powers, of drawing clearly from the universe around them the conclusions which occasionally seemed to break indistinctly upon them, but which their minds required in full assurance. Earth and skies continually suggested the idea of a First Cause, the knowledge of which seemed to be a natural want of the mind, and must influence materially the conduct. But was this instinctive feeling to be taken as full evidence of the existence of that towards which it was directed?—and if not, how should minds oppressed with worldly cares, uneducated, or having but imperfect help from science, work out such a vast conclusion from their own resources? A word from Heaven would aid their weakness, solve their doubts, and afford them the delight of faith, without the trouble of acquiring it. What wonder, then, that men professing to have received this message from heaven, or to be its interpreters, should find a ready submission to their claims, succeed in having them admitted without a very rigid scrutiny, and continue to find docile recipients even long after they had begun, instead of bread, to give stones? During the ages of mankind's moral and intellectual minority, it seems indeed natural that authority, derived from the ascendancy of some few superior individuals, should exercise guardianship over the human mind, and provide its necessary food, until full-grown reason should be able both to guide and nourish itself. Hence the philanthropist regards with complacency the various Revelations which have afforded to men spiritual supplies, although not of unmixed purity; and hears, in the supposed direct voices from heaven, prelude-sounds of the voice which speaks through nature and reason, in a tone rising slowly into clearness in the lapse of ages."*

But then, while the instinctive desire for knowledge respecting a First Cause, and the future destiny of mankind, thus satisfied itself in revelation, by giving to itself the hasty sanction of Divine certainty, it was making what in that early stage of intelligence men thought *ought* to be true, become a settled possession to the mind, which has, by those who have feelingly appropriated it, to be again painfully parted with. It is very true that this religious trust comes to us from Christianity, because Christianity was the expression of the feeling as soon as it sprang up to definite form in the world's experience. The religion of nature at that certain point, the highest yet attained, embodied itself in Christianity, and historically, actually, cannot quit the association. Hence it is still in a *Christian* spirit that many rejecters of Christianity appeal to Nature: and have to find her obdurate to that appeal until the state of feeling is again reduced to its proper channel.—Meanwhile, this confidence of the soul in the fulfilment of its own desires, (the cause, and, in its exaggerated form the result, of Christianity,) itself affords, when regarded as a natural product, the strongest argument to the advocate of

* *Christian Theism*, by the Author of *Origin of Christianity*. 1839. pp. 19, 20.

now glimmers on many portions of the void where continuous darkness once reigned; though that very light has also a tendency to disclose other difficulties; for, as the sphere of knowledge increases, the outline of darkness beyond also increases, and increases even in a greater ratio. But I also find, I frankly admit, that on many of my difficulties, and especially that connected with the origin of evil, and other precisely analogous difficulties of Scriptures, *no* light whatever is cast; to the solution of them man has not made the slightest conceivable approximation. These things I submit to, as an exercise of my faith and a test of my docility.' Thus speaks the Christian; and the Atheist and the Sceptic occupy ground as consistent. They say, 'We agree with Christians, that the Bible contains no greater difficulties than those involved in the inscrutable constitution and course of nature; but on the very principles on which the Rationalist, or Spiritualist, or Deist, or whatever he pleases to call himself, rejects the Divine origin of the former, we are compelled to go a few steps further, and *deny*—or *doubt*—the divine origin of the latter. It is true that the Bible presents no greater difficulties than the external universe and its administration; (it cannot involve greater;) but if those difficulties are sufficient to justify the denial or doubt of the divine authorship of the one, they are sufficient to justify denial or *doubt* about the Divine origin of the other.'—You ought, on the principle on which you reject so much of the Bible,—namely, that it does not harmonize with the deductions of your intellect, the instincts of conscience, the intuitions of the 'spiritual faculty,'—to become Manichæans at the least... Butler leaves two alternatives, and only two, in my judgment open; leaves two parties untouched; one is the Christian, and the other is the Atheist or the Sceptic; but I am profoundly convinced he does not leave a consistent footing for anything between. To refute him, you have to show that this world does *not* exhibit the inequalities—the miseries—the apparent caprice in its administration—the involuntary ignorance—the enormous wrongs—the wide-spread sorrow and death it does... If you can show to an unbeliever in Christianity, who is yet (as most are) a theist, that any objection derived from its apparent repugnance to wisdom or goodness applies equally to the 'constitution and course of nature', you do fairly compel him (as long as he remains a theist) to admit that *that* objection *ought* not to have weight with him. He has indeed an alternative; that of Atheism or Scepticism; but it is clear that he must give up either his argument or his—theism. It may be called, indeed, an argument *ad hominem;* but as almost every unbeliever in Christianity is a man of the above stamp, it is of wide application. This is the fair issue to which Butler brings his argument; and the conclusiveness of his logic has been shown in this, that, however easily 'analogies' may be 'retorted,' the parties affected by it have never answered it."*

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* *Eclipse of Faith.* 1852. pp. 408-412.

natural religion. For, "it has not unfrequently happened, that the untutored feelings of mankind have anticipated the results of philosophic investigation. Nature (the instinct of feeling) has spoken first; reasoning and science have followed slowly with a confirmation of her voice... Science and philosophy are, however, yet in their infancy, and especially as regards their application to subjects supposed to be connected with morality and religion. The belief that Revelation has assumed these subjects as her own peculiar ground, has hitherto impeded the growth of free inquiry upon them amongst nations most competent to the task. Released from this restraint, and having unbounded scope to traverse the creation in search of evidence, mankind may reach points in moral discovery which at present would be at once pronounced visionary. The achievements of mechanical and chemical science may be equalled or outdone by those of moral and intellectual research; and a clearer confession be forced out of nature concerning the character of the Creator and the ultimate destination of man."*

To those who thus truly face the perplexities of nature, the solution is, indeed, not at hand. No matter: for the present, at least, faith or philosophy must serve them;—they must do without it.—At all events, the only possibility of finding a real solution is by seeking it in the right direction; and that is, by simply inquiring, what IS: which may truly be called Divine truth, as opposed to human theory.

"In the attempts made by man to explain the varied phenomena of the universe, history reveals to us three distinct and characteristic stages, by Comte named the Theological (Supernatural), the Metaphysical, and the Positive. In the first, man explains phenomena by some fanciful conception suggested in the analogies of his own consciousness; in the second, by some *à priori* conception of inherent or superadded *entities*, suggested in the *constancy* observable in phenomena, which constancy leads him to suspect that they are not produced by any *intervention* on the part of an external being, but are owing to the *nature* of the things themselves; in the third he explains phenomena by adhering solely to these constancies of succession and co-existence ascertained inductively, and recognized as the *laws* of nature (or rather, to use a term less liable to objection and misapprehension, the *methods* of nature†). In the theological stage, Nature is regarded as the theatre whereon the arbitrary wills of Superior Powers play their varying and variable parts. Men are startled at unusual occurrences, and explain them by fanciful conceptions. A solar eclipse is understood, and unerringly predicted to a moment, by Positive Science; but in the theological epoch it appeared that some dragon had swallowed the sun! In the metaphysical stage the notion of capricious divinities is replaced by that of *abstract entities*, whose modes of action are, however, *invariable;* and in this *recognition of invariableness* lies the germ of science. In this epoch, Nature has a "horror of a vacuum", organised beings have a "vital principle", and matter has a *vis inertiæ*. In the positive stage, the invariableness of phenomena under similar conditions is recognized as the sum total of human investigation, and beyond the laws which regulate phenomena, it is

* *Origin of Christianity*, p. 486. † See *Leader*, May 8, 1852.

XIII.

**The principle of Justice is not apparent throughout the administration of the world.**

Let then him who objects against Christianity that its leading doctrines are opposed to the natural moral instincts of man, test his principle fairly by carrying it with him to a like scrutiny into the constitution and course of nature, without shrinking from the consequences to which it will lead him. Let him openly face the broad fact—to him the fearful issue—that NOWHERE will he meet with the full and entire gratification of that moral perception which he finds in himself, and which he sets up as the criterion of the abstract Just and Good. He must acknowledge that, judged in this manner, with the exclusion of all aid from Christianity, the moral order of the universe appears defective and inexplicable.

He is offended at the arbitrary distinction made in the scheme of salvation between the elect and the reprobate :—is then in nature one man not born to honour and another to dishonour ? or is it supposed to be from a prospective regard to the *merits* of individuals, that one comes into the world inheriting wealth and friends, bodily health and mental dispositions towards virtue, while another creeps into existence loathly with disease, prone to vice, surrounded by all kinds of adverse circumstances, the consequences of which original condition attend him throughout his whole course here, and if he be destined to another life, will pursue him beyond the grave ?

It is shocking to Justice that the innocent should suffer for the sins of the guilty :—but this is the ordinary, every-day course of things.* "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge," is a proverb that tells a very old experience. It is as clear in natural philosophy as it is in Scripture, that the whole race pays the penalty for the transgressions of its first progenitors ;—nay, that every human being is punished for all the wrong-doing that has been committed before and around him. Thus only, indeed, is constituted the brotherhood of mankind, who are knit together in common interests and mutual dependence, by the necessity of suffering, as well as enjoying, together ; so that man is compelled to desire the welfare and virtue of his neighbours, even for his own sake,—a desire which, though it spring from selfishness, may be trained and purified into a spirit of disinterested love. From this necessity of suffering for one another's faults, springs a capability of generosity and heroism, which would never be called forth if literally every man must bear his own burden ; and a new power of winning over the sinner, hardened against every other impression, to repentance and a new life, by grateful admiration for the willing suffering that thus—in a small temporal sense, shadowing forth the religious one,—purchases his own salvation. And thus we have a glimpse of the mode of Divine working, bringing moral good out of moral evil, which would have been inconceivable to our faculties. But vicarious suffering, though it may be proved to produce these blessed fruits, is not according to Justice, which requires

* Butler's *Analogy*, Part II. ch. V.

considered idle to penetrate."* "It must not be supposed that each of the three periods had a separate and exclusive existence. On the contrary, they have always co-existed, but in the first the Theological, in the second the Metaphysical, in the third the Positive conception has *predominated.* The germ of Positivism will be found even in the Fetishistic period; nor was man ever absolutely incapable of abstraction. On the other hand, the Positive period will not entirely exclude the initial and intermediate tendencies of the human mind."† "To prove that the theological stage is not thoroughly and universally passed, I need only refer to the monstrous illustration of our own days, when learned men, the Teachers of our people, gravely attributed the Cholera to God's anger at England's endowment of the Maynooth Colleges!"‡

XII. That the theological systems framed in an early age should present moral difficulties to believers of the present day, is a self-evident necessity. To call the mysteries of nature *parallel* difficulties is a perversion of analogy. We have a perfectly intelligible explanation of the former in their being the invention of men. How can we compare fiction with fact? The assertions of revelation must be *proved to be true* before they can stand upon the same ground as what we know to be true. We infer, indeed, that the men who invented these fictions, and thought them worthy of being divine, had in their own minds immoral elements, which must have been derived from previous circumstances—from nature: but to make any analogy between the Author of nature, and the authors of the Bible stories, we must know that nature does represent *God's ideal.* We see every evidence to the contrary. Nature everywhere shows repugnance to the evil in itself; is continually fighting against it, and striving to rise out of it and above it. Whence the evil came we do not attempt to explain, for we do not know, and we see no means of knowing. To call it the work of the Devil, serves as a convenient allegory, so long as we remember that it is nothing more. As we doubt or deny the Divine authorship of Bible immoralities, so also indeed must we doubt or deny the Divine authorship of natural evil in the sense that an Almighty Good Being can will and take pleasure in evil. But at the same time we know that this divine work of Nature, unlike the Bible, is not completed; that but a small page is open to us; and that, neither if the whole were read out to us, might the mystery be at all revealed to our incompetent faculties. Still what appears to us evil we cannot call good. To different minds different degrees of Faith or of Infidelity will furnish a resting-place: but all degrees are well-based that are the unsophisticated deductions of each mind from real observation of Nature. If we are in earnest, what we have to do is not to make out our own theories,—not to make theories at all upon the subject,—but to find out what is the actual truth.

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* Comte's *Positive Philosophy*, by G. H. Lewes. *Leader*, April 24, 1852. See also Comte, Introduction, Chap. I.

† *Leader*, May 8. Letter of correspondent "*M.*" ‡ *Ibid*, April 24.

that retribution should be dealt to every one according to his own works. This principle indeed cannot be said to be carried out strictly and uniformly in any part of the administration of the world. It is true, in a general sense, that sin always draws its punishment after it; but it does not always fall upon the head of the sinner. It is not only that his innocent family and connexions must suffer *with* him, but sometimes he appears not to suffer himself at all, or not in proportion to his guilt. Worldly prosperity is notoriously incommensurate with men's deserts. It is felt, indeed, as a general rule, that success awaits good conduct,—experience has established a prevailing confidence that the virtuous are more likely to get on well than the wicked; but the rule has so many exceptions, and is liable to so many counteractions, unlooked-for and unaccountable, that no proverbial saying has been commoner in all ages than the caprice of fortune. And as honest labour aud industry do not ensure the acquisition of wealth, nor prudence and worldly wisdom the retention of it; so neither is fame, nor friendship, nor the attainment of learning, or of any of the good things of life, always adjusted according to merit; so neither is virtue secure even of being its own reward, since bodily disease can produce morbid depression of mind, and prevent even the enjoyment of a good conscience, while vice is in its nature callous, and the deeper its dye is ordinarily the more insensible to the remorse that should be its punishment.—If it be said that the suffering consequent upon all kinds of transgression, wilful or not, which alights sometimes upon the doer, sometimes on others, is not to be regarded as punishment, but as a lesson and a warning: this may be advantageous on the whole, but not to the sufferer who obtains no benefit from it. That one man's mortal sickness—perhaps the result of his father's intemperance—should lead to the discovery of a remedy that will save the lives of those to come after him, is not *justice;* that one man's folly or vice should teach others to avoid his example, is not *justice;* in general, that one generation should reap the fruits of the labours of another, is not *justice*,—for though they in turn labour for the next, there is none of that proportioning to the exact share of each individual which is necessary to answer the demand of strict Justice. There is a rude sort of "things turning out right in the main, if one be set against another"; but not the dealing with every single creature which man would expect from a Just Creator.—It is proverbial amongst natural philosophers that "Nature cares for the Whole, not for individuals". Does this inspire a satisfactory feeling for a hapless unit out of that mass of mortality to regard the God of Nature with?

To the religious mind the claim of *Justice* from God is an impious one; the idea of human merit is abhorrent and absurd. Justice is a matter between man and man, and has nothing to do with his relation to his Maker, in whose hands he is merely as the clay on the potter's wheel, to be born in what nature and condition He may please, to live and act, to suffer and enjoy, merely according to His sovereign will and pleasure. With this idea as the basis of all his reasoning, the Christian finds no insurmountable stumbling-block in the inequalities to which men

XIII. The result of the scientific observation of nature, is more and more to discover, that mind is as obedient to law as matter; that the laws which govern mental phenomena,—or rather, the methods according to which we find that mental phenomena are developed,—are as strict and unvarying as the physical economy of the universe. The great moral law that virtue brings good consequences and vice evil,—which is but another formulary for expressing the very definition of virtue and vice,—acts as uninterruptedly and as irresistibly as the law of gravitation; and if all the moral universe were in order, would doubtless act as perfectly for every individual as for the whole. But moral order is not accomplished; although apparently tending to it as towards "God's ideal." There are a myriad conflicting impulses at work which mix and thwart one another at present. If adverse circumstances divert the course of retribution, and interfere with its legitimate sequences, a distortion of moral phenomena takes place. The law is not changed, cannot be changed; but the reward or punishment falls on the wrong head. Events move on: the plane of individual action, which lay eccentric and unconformable, adjusts itself to parallelism with the general movement; falls by degrees into its right place;—by the friction of the mighty whirl of life, obstructions are worn down, and the amorphous conglomerations of mental atoms sphere themselves into harmonious combination.

True, in this whirl individual interests seem uncared for.—But how shall we say so, when out of it there is evolving itself in our breasts this nice sense of Justice, which tells us what is due to ourselves, and by a farther, nobler stage, what is therefore due to every fellow-being? *Here* is God showing His will to do Justice to each one; by this means where first He can,—if we must speak of Him in human language.*—In the heart of man He has made expression for this generous sentiment, which now first has means of uttering itself amidst this brute world. Man alone in the world is capable of the feeling of Justice; and it is for Man to realize it. Let him see to it: it is his mission, his prerogative, to bring it about; and if he fail he will have to perish, and God to make a better instrument; for we see plainly that God has a will to have it done. By the indignation stirring in our breasts at the wrongs endured by our poor trampled brethren, he urges us to procure for them redress.——Revenge, perhaps, by the same rule?—No: for we have a better teaching, from our Godlike reason, that revenge will fail to effect its purpose.

This, we think, is the true lesson of Nature; and we may call it true piety. In this way, we recognize a genuine command of God. But in the anthropomorphic idea of God and Providence, taught by Christianity, we find a great hindrance to the real duty of man. By leading him to look for the personal care of God, as of a Being who out of his human emotion

* [The sense in which the name of "God" is used, figuratively, on this side of the Argument, (except in some of the extracts by theistic writers,) will be seen in a later section.]

are born. There is, besides, a sense in which he can truly say, as no others can, that all men are equal in the sight of God; since the temporal differences in their lot are nothing compared to the common boon of salvation that is offered to rich and poor alike by faith in Jesus Christ. In the light of this great proof of Divine love all petty difficulties vanish. And what if things go wrong in the lower world? The trusting soul will find all made right in Eternity.

XIV.

To believe in future compensation because necessary to Divine Goodness, is false ground.

The irregularity in the distribution of good and evil, and the deficiency of retribution in this life, have forced upon almost all thinkers the conviction of the necessity for compensation in another world. "That which affords a sufficient answer to objections against the wisdom, justice, and goodness of the constitution of Nature, is its being a scheme, imperfectly comprehended; a scheme in which means are made use of to accomplish ends; and which is carried on by general laws;"* and which requires for its completion another world. The incompleteness of the scheme here, leads forward the expectation inevitably to a continuation beyond the grave. Belief in another life, and in a constantly superintending Providence, is what satisfies the mind at once. Calamities now are trials to improve the character, to increase faith, to wean the soul from attachment to earth, and will be abundantly compensated in the blessed hereafter. So strong and satisfactory is this conclusion, that many minds abandon themselves to it as one that their natural instincts tell them *must* be true. Supposing otherwise there be no proof of another world, this alone is felt sufficient to establish it: the belief in the goodness of God requires it, for it is impossible to conceive him dealing ill with his creatures.

In this degree of faith many theists are contented to rest; being generally such as have known most of the bright side of life, and have not been forced by the sharpness of personal affliction to a keen sense of the difficulty of the question, to them appearing so easy of solution. To repose with tranquil confidence on the goodness of an All-wise Parent, which seems to them the rational fruit of the religion of Nature, is all, they think, that is required for man; in this they feel themselves content, and pity the self-tormenting spirits that harass themselves with the vexatious burden of a faith that was framed to meet deeper requirements than they are aware of. Miserable is their security, must we exclaim, and baseless the ground on which they rest! Delusive the confidence, which will fail them when the time of their utmost need comes upon them! If the belief in the Goodness of God rest only upon what Nature can teach, it will prove itself weak and wavering, changing with the changing aspects under which things are viewed; vanishing perhaps quite when sickness and failing life cast their shade over the mind,—at that hour of gloom when the lamp of Faith is wont to burn the brightest!

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* Butler's *Analogy*, Part II. ch. IV. p. 201.

would do all for man Himself, human effort to right the wronged is cramped and stunted; since the best that man can do is thought to be to leave all to God. Here is a mighty obstruction at the heart of the matter that has to be cleared away: a false piety which, through necessary disappointment, is the fruitful source of blasphemy and *im*piety.

And the poor injured individual, who has no help from God, and as yet no help from his fellow-men,—what shall we say to him?—If he has the blessing of a great soul within him, that can solace itself in noble sympathy with the good of the whole,—if too he can feel the benefit he himself shares in being subject to so grand a principle, an instrument in working it out,—it is well with him. If not, the more our compassion for our poor brother! Let us not beat about to satisfy our own minds with some comfortable imaginary alleviation, some conceited device of vindication for the ways of God; but confess with the sincerity due to our best feelings, and the sympathy due to the sufferers, that it *is* hard. In God's name let us strive that these things be so no more.

XIV. There is no presumption in believing ourselves thus the destined agents of God's Justice,—or let us say simply, in following out the highest dictates of our own breast:—there may be presumption in saying,—limited creatures as we are,—that what we feel to be Justice God ought to carry out, must make another world in order that he may carry out. That is what we must leave to Him, in mystery, at least for the present: with resignation, if we are able. As far as we can see, the "scheme" of the world regards the Whole, and not individuals. Which if it is a hard creed, is very fruitless to debate; and much more fruitless is it to murmur against it. We must make the best of what *is*:—perhaps capable of being made somewhat otherwise by our virtuous action, but certainly never by our unworthy lamenting. If in the weakness of our mind we sink into despondency and desolation, much more when the body grows weak, in dissolution, it is sad for us. Let us learn to care less for ourselves, and it will be less sad. There are some human spirits so beautiful that they are truly blessed in abstract contemplation of great and noble ideas. They take not much concern about themselves while they know these to be progressing. Death is not spiritually painful to these:—it is the attachment to self, self in its lowest form of animal gratification, and the superstitious dread of the unknown which haunts uncultured minds, that makes the parting scene one of horror and dismay.

XV.

From nature alone, God cannot be proved to be good.

For the truth must be fairly viewed, and the rejecter of Christianity must answer for the consequences to which his principles lead him. The Moral Perfection of God is a Christian doctrine. The belief in his unvarying Goodness is derived from the Bible ; and it is hence that it has been transferred by writers on Natural Theology to the domain of Nature, which would never of itself have given it birth. It is a truth that has been felt in secret by more than have dared, or have thought it advisable, to speak openly, that in nature the proofs of the goodness of God are so balanced by instances of an opposite kind, as to afford no certain gronnd for reposing confidence in it.

It is objected against the sacred history of the Old Testament that the character of Jehovah as there depicted is cruel, relentless, savage : but the slaughter of the Canaanites, the hewing down of men, women and children with the sword, and other cruelties commanded to the Israelites, are well matched by the pitiless destructive agencies of the God of Nature. See the wholesale sacrifice of life in the great physical convulsions—storms, conflagrations, earthquakes—where holocausts of living creatures are swallowed up by dead matter, like a huge, senseless idol. Consider the yet more fearful destruction involved in the law of animated life by which one species preys upon another, now accompanied with cruelty, increasing in every stage, till we come to man, the most cruel, who preys on all, the tyrant at the top of the scale. Consider the immense tribes of parasite animals, whose whole existence is framed upon the disease and torture of other creatures. Consider disease in general, which if it may be thought to have a moral purpose with regard to man, yet also torments with fruitless sufferings all the irrational creation. Where does Nature show a tender regard for life, when amidst the lavish multitudes she pours forth into being, myriads perish in the first struggle, and at every stage of existence, to be instantly replaced by myriads more ?—a manner of creation, as it were, in sport or mockery, and not confined to zoophytes and reptiles, to the lower animals, but continued to the highest that tenant the earth. Are the swarms of a pauper population apparently better cared for than the insect tribes ?—Religion alone, not nature, shows a Providence loving and watching over every immortal child of Adam.

Would a *man*, with mere human benevolence, if he had the power to be a Creator, desire to bring forth beings destined to the horrors of a life of slavery, to the grinding oppression endured by the masses out of most nations, to the never-ending toil, the crushing burden of poverty that stifles heart and soul out of the multitudes even of our own countrymen ? Would he choose to bring into existence maimed, distorted, diseased creatures, and send them thus crippled to fight their way through a hard world, never interfering himself to smoothe their path, but leaving them to the mercy of that stern "order of things" in which the strong only can succeed, and the weak are ruthlessly trampled down,—the sooner and

MORAL GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD.]

XV. As we find Justice in the workings of Nature only as a general principle as it were of moral equilibrium, which displays itself according to the human sentiment only when carried out by human agency: still more is Goodness, properly speaking, wanting, and is seen to be an idea applicable to it only by a figure of speech. The tendency of Nature is towards good; most of all is it good by developing the power of goodness in man;—all the successful, perfect operations of nature are productive of happiness; harmony with nature is happiness; and happiness helps nature on to that completer harmony which will make happiness nearer to perfection and universality:—but goodness, as the personal feeling that flows forth in voluntary kindness from the love of one being to another, has no existence save between man and man. Yet the figure by which we speak of the goodness of God, or of Nature, is so natural where there is any depth of feeling, that it must continue to be employed even after it has been recognized as merely the poetry of the heart. That which gives us so much joy we must call good; for the sake of the joy, while our spirits are light, we must hide from ourselves the idea of pain, and say and persuade ourselves it is *only* good. The mind of humanity was thus exhilarated when Christianity beamed upon it as a thought from Heaven, that gave the blessed solution of that puzzle which had tormented it since it began to think. God, then, who showed himself in human form, was all goodness, all love. Such, at least, is the perfect result into which Christianity has developed itself in the purest and best of its adherents. In the light of this idea of Divine love, all nature has worn its brightest aspect;—so bright, that nature has been felt—*truly* felt—to afford after all stronger demonstration of the goodness of God than Christianity itself,—with all its hard points and dark corners that reason must beware of prying into. Thus Butler feels his most solid basis of argument in the established confidence that men in these Christian times have in the moral government and benevolent disposition of the Author of Nature. If this is not to be relied on, there is nothing in Christianity *more* sure,—nothing, as the tenour of his thoughts always implies, nothing *so* sure.

With this bright and *Christian* mode of viewing things,—if defective by being partial, yet animating the mind to the discovery of good,—writers on natural theology have searched and found in rich abundance evidences of the sources of happiness that nature contains; doubtless but a faint sample of what she will continue to unfold.

"That evil has a use, and a benevolent one, cannot be doubted by him whose knowledge of our Creator has been gathered from the numberless instances of benevolent design throughout the universe, which, whilst they manifest the power of God, show us plainly the direction of that power towards the production of the greatest possible enjoyment. If, therefore, it can be demonstrated that pain is a necessary agent in the hand of God for the production of this balance of enjoyment; that it is the only effectual guardian of that system of organization upon which our

the more effectually perhaps the better! Throughout all her dominion, it is the way of Nature to crush out the weak, to help and crown the strong. Just the reverse is it with her from the divinely beautiful description of the Saviour,—"the smoking flax will he not quench, the bruised reed will he not break:"—the knowledge of such a Saviour is what our Father knew we had need of while subjected to the hardness of natural existence. The puny infant dies, the feeble in body or mind are jostled at every turn out of the enjoyment of the blessings of life; the man of low character is disposed to fall lower and lower; when disease oppresses the body, the powers of the mind decline also; and with infirmities, amongst the lower-minded of mankind, as amongst all tribes of animals, come disgust and oppression on the part of fellow-beings. "To him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

This pushing on of the Whole, in disregard of individuals, which characterises the mechanical, material world,—so opposite to the spiritual action of Love,—can, then, never, when really brought home to our consciousness, become the basis of a loving reliance upon the God of Nature. The knowledge of Him as a Guardian, Father, and Friend, the truly Just and Good, comes only from the proper attestation of his personal love, given in the gracious declaration of Himself and His blessed attributes in his revealed word.

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XVI.

**The permission of evil is as inexplicable as the command of it.**

When the natural calamities to which men are liable, are adduced as parallel mysteries to the supernatural inflictions recorded in Scripture, it is objected that no comparison ought to be made between such "*sovereign* acts of inexplicable will on the part of God, and his *command* to a being so constituted as man to perform them.—

"I maintain that the one class of facts are just as 'inexplicable' as the other, and only appear otherwise because, in the one case, we daily

happiness depends; that it is essential to our very existence; will not the question in part be stripped of its mystery, and the ways of God to man be justified even to our finite comprehensions?... To check that utter subversion of order, and consequently of happiness, which the necessary ignorance of created intelligences would occasion, a something must be appointed which shall constantly act as a warning whenever these laws are transgressed. It is doubtful whether a monitor more effectual or better adapted for the purpose than Pain could possibly have been selected, so far as regards intelligence so limited as belongs to the inhabitants of this earth... But is it equitable that some sufferers should be made examples,.. that the rest of mankind might take warning from their fate? The consistent Necessarian will not hesitate to answer in the affirmative: he will regard the parties merely as links in the chain of causation, as atoms of the great mass of sensation which it appears to be the object of the Deity to produce. So far from injustice being done to them, they were brought into the world and each made the vehicle of ten thousand more pleasurable sensations than painful ones, . and although their final sacrifice could not benefit *them*, yet during their life-time they were gainers by the same law that rendered their examples efficacious for the good of society... With reference to cases in which a man suffers for acting virtuously, where it has been represented that God is not just unless a future state be made to compensate the virtuous sufferer; we think it may be shown that the happiness of a future state must be as gratuitous as the happiness here, and that no one is justified in claiming it of the Deity as the payment of a debt."*

"When we perceive that the object and legitimate operation of every one of the natural laws, when observed, is to produce happiness to man; and that the punishments have the sole object in view of forcing him back to this enjoyment, we cannot, under the supremacy of the moral sentiments and intellect, fail to bow in humility before them, as at once wise, just, and benevolent." "As the whole is an aggregate of all the parts, if any natural institution, when viewed in its operation in regard to the race, is found to be just and beneficent, it cannot well be cruel and unjust to individuals, who are the component parts of that whole."†

"Physical pain in many aspects appears not as an accident and an abuse, but as if definitely designed. . Here it may suffice to remark, that the difficulty turns on the *quasi*-Epicurean assumption, that Physical Ease and Comfort is the most valuable thing in the universe: but that is not true, even with brutes. There is a certain perfection in the nature of each, consisting in the full development of all their powers, to which the existing Order manifestly tends; and any one who shall speculatively reconstruct the organized world and logically follow out his own scheme, will probably end by discerning, that the present arrangements of God are better than man could have devised. As for susceptibility to Pain, it is obviously essential to every part of corporeal life, and to discuss the question of *degree*

* *Philosophy of Necessity*, by Charles Bray. Vol. I. pp. 195, 196, 205, 206.

† *Constitution of Man*, by George Combe. Henderson's Edition, pp. 361, 362. See the whole work.

see them, have become accustomed to them, and, what is more than all, *cannot deny* them,—which last we can so promptly do in the other case; for Moses is not here to contradict us. But I rather think, that a being constituted morally and intellectually like us, who had never known *any* but a world of happiness, would just as promptly deny that God could ever perform such feats as are daily performed in *this* world! I repeat, that if for some reasons ('inexplicable,' I grant you) God does not mind *doing* such things, he is not likely to hesitate to *enjoin* them; for reasons *perhaps* equally inexplicable. I say *perhaps;* for, as I compare such an event as the earthquake in Lisbon, or the plague in London, with the extermination of the Canaanites, I solemnly assure you that I find a greater difficulty, as far as my 'intuitions' go, in supposing the former event to have been effected by a *divine* agency than the latter. If we take the Scripture history, we must at least allow, that the race thus doomed had long tried the patience of heaven by their flagrant impiety and unnatural vices; that they had become a centre and a source (as we sometimes see collections of men to be) of moral pestilence, in the vicinage of which it was unsafe for men to dwell; that, as the Scriptures say, they had 'filled up the measure of their iniquities.' The whole proceeding is represented as a solemn judicial one; and it seems to me much less difficult to suppose them to harmonize with the character of a just and even beneficent being than those wholesale butcheries which have desolated the world, in every hour of its long history, without any discrimination whatever of innocence or guilt; which, if they have inflicted unspeakable miseries on the immediate victims, have produced probably as much or more in the agony of the myriad myriads of hearts which have bled or broken in unavailing sorrow over the sufferings they could not relieve. . If God does not mind *doing* such things, why are we to suppose that he minds on some occasions ordering them to be *done;* unless we suppose that man has more refined intuitions of right and wrong, and knows better what they are than God himself?... It is plain that, in accordance with our primitive 'moral intuitions', we should hold him who had the power to prevent a wrong and did not use it, as a participator and accomplice in the crime he did not prevent. Applying, therefore, the principles of Mr. Newman, I must refuse to acknowledge such conduct on the part of the Divine Being, and say, that such things are not done by him. If I may trust my *whisper* of him, derived from *analogous* moral qualities in myself, I must believe that an administration which so ruthlessly permits these things, is not *his* work; but that his power, wisdom, and goodness have been thwarted, baffled, and over mastered by some 'omnipotent devil', to use Mr. Newman's expression; if it be, then that whisper of him cannot be trusted: the heathen was right, '*Sunt superis sua jura*'. In other words, I feel that I must become an Atheist, a Pantheist, a Manichæan, or—a *sceptic*. All these perplexities are increased

is absurd. On the other hand, Human capacity for Sorrow is equally necessary to our whole moral nature, and Sorrow itself is a most essential process for the perfecting of the soul."*

"The question is whether the *present* condition contains any absolute, or any needless partial evil. Pain is incidental to the development of a finite being with even a small amount of freedom. But as man is more free, and individually and generically progressive, a larger am nt of pain is incidental to his existence." "I do not pretend that I can clear up all the difficulties in this matter by the inductive mode—of studying the details, and thereby learning their law and showing how each particular form of evil turns into good ;—I shall be obliged to refer to the idea of God as Infinite, and from that deduce the value of the function of the special forms of pain and misery. The wisest man is only a child as yet. Philosophy has read but a few pages of this great book of Nature, whereof all must be known fully to understand a part. When I know there is an Infinite God, I am sure that his purpose is good and his means adequate ; I spontaneously trust therein. . In the present condition of science, it is not hard to learn the general tendency of things in Nature, and thence get the analogy of the whole to help explain particular parts. But no man, I think, as yet has been able to explain all these cases by the purely inductive process."†

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XVI. In the first, or "theological" stage of thought, when it is the tendency of men to ascribe all events to Deities of human passions, the rude notion of justice, more in its beginning like revenge, leads to the supposition that physical calamities are judicial inflictions. In this light they are represented in the Old Testament narratives : and this is certainly a degree better than regarding them as the result of wanton cruelty or wilful neglect ; but scarcely better than supposing them permitted for the sake of greater good than could otherwise be obtained ;—as it is manifestly a more barbarous idea that God should rain down fire himself to destroy a guilty city, than that he should suffer pestilence to wait on the violation of cleanliness, or even on innocent poverty, in obedience to pre-ordained laws the recognition of which in their constant inevitable operation is to benefit all future time. Still, that a benevolent Being, according to the common view of Deity, should "*not mind*" doing such things, even with such a purpose, is doubtless contrary to all our conceptions. If we suppose that God has human feelings of love and compassion, we must suppose that this conflict with evil gives him pain,—as it is said consistently, that men by sin can "*grieve* the Spirit of the Most High." Into such gratuitous perplexities are we led by *suppositions !* If, however, we must read nature in this figurative style, her true lesson is after all, that, in some sense, God *does* mind,—minds as the very essence of his being,—and is perpetually and everywhere striving against destruction, and misery, and sin ; especially through his prime agent, man, the best "interpreter of nature." By man's

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* *The Soul*, by F. W. Newman. 3d Ed. p. 31.

† *Theism, Atheism, and the Popular Theology*, by Th. Parker. Chapman's Quarterly Series. No. I. 1853, pp. 204, 192.

when I trace them up to that profound mystery in which they all originate, —I mean the permission of physical and moral evil. Either evil could have been prevented or not; if it could, its immense and horrible prevalence is at war with the intuition already referred to; if it could not, who shall prove it? I am no more able to contradict the intuitions of the intellect than those of the conscience; and if anything can be called a contradiction of the former, it is to be told that a Being of infinite power, wisdom, and beneficence *could* not construct a world without an immensity of evil in it; no reason being assignable or even imaginable for such a proposition, except the fact that such a world has not been created! I am therefore compelled to doubt, whether such a universe be really the fabrication of such a Being."*

XVII.

The doctrine of the "Fall" is the best clue to the mystery.

"But the Bible does at least give me a plausible account of some of the mysteries which baffle me: it tells me that man was created holy and happy; that he has fallen from his 'excellent estate'; and hence the misery, ignorance, and guilt, in which he is involved, and which have rendered revelation necessary... The Scripture account of the 'fall'—however inexplicable it may be that God should have permitted it—yet does expressly assert that, somehow or other, it is man's fault, not God's; that man is not in his normal condition, nor in the condition for which he was created. Dark as are the clouds which envelope the Divine Ruler, 'their skirts are tinged with gold,'—pervaded and penetrated throughout their dusky depths by that Mercy which assures us that, in some intelligible sense, this condition of man is contrary to the Divine Will, which, from the first, resolved to remedy it; and that a day is coming when what is mysterious shall be explained—so far, at least, that what has been 'wrong' shall be 'righted'. But what is the theory of the universe propounded by these writers†? That man is now just what he was at first—as he came from his Creator's hand; or rather in some parts of the world (thanks to himself though) a little *better* than he was originally .. that for unnumbered ages,—for aught we know myriads of ages—he has been slowly crawling up, a very sloth in 'progress',

* *Eclipse of Faith*, pp. 150-154. [These words are put into the mouth of a Sceptic, but evidently represent the course of argument which the Author thinks may be rightly turned by the Christian against the "Spiritualist", or any unbeliever also a Theist.]

† [Mr. Parker and Mr. Newman are here alluded to.]

activity and skill does Nature overcome physical disorders; by man's superior wisdom and beneficence does she subdue brutish violence and debasing sins. If any ambitious self-deceiver thinks that by becoming a greater brute himself and swallowing up the less, he shall be serving God and doing him pleasure, as the Israelites thought of old, nature shows him, or shows the world presently, that he is quite under a false notion. Impatient, passion-governed men are but beginning to understand the error; but nature will make it plain in the end. She never applauds, never sanctions, never commands wrong doing. It always turns out to be the foolish, mistaken thing. If it were true that God *commanded* pillage and slaughter, and was pleased with those who obeyed him, it would be analogous to nothing in nature; it would stand as an unique, unparalleled instance of supernatural immorality. What God really commands, and is trying to get accomplished, is to be found, the most of it yet revealed, in the hearts of the best men. There is no analogy between this really Divine teaching, and what the old savage Hebrews thought to be Divine.*

But we shall never cease from blundering while we take as the starting-point of our reasoning on these matters, that which we are farthest of all from understanding,—while we are debating what is proper for God to do, instead of observing what He has done;—scanning the motives of Deity, instead of attending to his deeds, and learning the lesson they convey; —straining to vindicate the character of God, instead of making good our own part! What *God* is, it seems that man can never know;—with all our thinking we shall never make Him other than ourselves, which is sure to mislead us:—what He will have *us* to be, what He will have each one practically to do, is sufficiently intelligible.

Thus much, however, is clear for our satisfaction: whatever be the nature of the Government of the World, within the certain knowledge of man the World has made a great and steady advance on the road of improvement.

XVII. What was the "origin of evil" we may also be well content to leave as a mystery; a matter of curious speculation which does not practically concern us. What we have to do is to contend with the Evil, to put an *end* to as much of it as we can; and it is our encouragement, that all science and human history show us that man has so contended with some degree of success hitherto, and may continue to contend with increasing means, and prospect of much greater success.

"The theologians who condemned the natural world, lived in an age when there was no sound philosophy, and almost no knowledge of physical science; they were unavoidably ignorant of the elementary qualities of human nature, .. unacquainted with the relations subsisting between the

* It is strange that the supporters of Revelation should insist upon its analogy with nature, when the essential idea of it is, that it is designed expressly to counteract Nature;—because nature is all wrong, is not going the way God intended, Revelation is supposed to be given to set it right. Is this to be done by confirming and sanctioning the very immorality it was meant to cure, as if upon the principle *similia similibus curantur?*

from the lowest Fetichism to Polytheism—from Polytheism, in all its infinitude of degrading forms, to imperfect forms of Monotheism—to make 'progress' to something else—heaven knows what! but certainly something still far below the horizon—still concealed in the illimitable future. . . According to this theory, the Great Father—supposed a being of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness—threw his miserable offspring on the face of the earth, with the elements of his nature originally so ill-poised and compounded, that everywhere and for unnumbered ages man has been, and for unnumbered ages *will* be doomed and necessitated to wallow in the most hideous, degrading, cruel forms of superstition,—inflicting and suffering reciprocally all the dreadful evils and wrongs which are entailed by them. For this, man was *created;* such a thing he was by original destination. If *this* be the picture of the Father of All, he is less kind to *his* offspring than the most intimate 'intuitions' teach them to be to theirs. The voice of nature teaches them not to expose their children; the universal Father, according to this theory, remorselessly exposed his! If I am to abjure the Bible because it gives me unworthy conceptions of the Deity, I must, with more reason, abjure, on similar grounds, such a detestable theory of man's creation, destination, and history."*

"Many persons represent as peculiar to the Gospel revelation, that which really does lie within the reach of natural reason. A familiar instance of this last is the doctrine of the corrupt nature of Man; which some represent as a truth resting on revelation, and claiming to be acknowledged as an article of faith not discoverable by reason: whereas, daily experience sufficiently proves it; and though there are still, and ever will be, some who will not learn from experience, men of sense, in all ages, seem to have fallen little, if at all, short of the truth, in that point. The *history*, indeed, of the fall of Man is revealed in Scripture; but the actual condition of Man, though often adverted to, can hardly be said to be *revealed;* any more than the truths, that the sun shines by day and the moon by night. The origin of evil, again, not a few are apt to speak of, as explained and accounted for, at least in great part, by the Scripture accounts of sin "entering into the world, and death by sin;" whereas the Scriptures leave us, with respect to the difficulty in question, just where they find us, and are manifestly not designed to remove it. He who professes to *account* for the existence of evil, by merely tracing it up to the *first* evil recorded as occurring, would have no reason to deride the absurdity of an atheist, who should profess to account for the origin of the human race, without having recourse to a Creator, by simply tracing them up to the *first* pair."†

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* *Eclipse of Faith,* pp. 159-162.

† Whately's *Essays.* Introduction, p. 19.

mind and external nature, and could not by possibility divine to what extent individuals and society were capable of being improved by natural means. In the history of man, they had read chiefly of misery and crime, and had in their own age beheld much of both. They were, therefore, naturally led to form a low estimate of human nature, and to expect little good from the cultivation of its inherent capabilities."*

"Unlike an over-fond parent, who fears lest her charge should receive the slightest hurt, Nature gives mankind a rough education, and allows them unscrupulously to receive many before they attain their majority. Man's infancy of six thousand years has abounded with disasters; yet Nature has looked on unmoved, tranquilly confident in the ultimate success of her plan; in evidence of which we see she now points to her charge, upon the whole healthy and vigorous, notwithstanding his past troubles, rendered partially wise and reflective in consequence of them, and shewing a strength of constitution in body and mind which allows the hope of a manhood of perfection."†

"The real commencement of human history is, in fact, much humbler than is commonly supposed, Man having everywhere begun by being a fetish-worshipper and a cannibal. Instead of indulging our horror and disgust of such a state of things by denying it, we should admit a collective pride in that human progressiveness which has brought us into our present state of comparative exaltation, while a being less nobly endowed than Man would have vegetated to this hour in his original wretched condition."‡

"From the beginning of human history there has been a progressive development of all the higher faculties of man; of the religious faculties, which connect man with God, as well as of the other faculties, which connect man with the material universe, and men with one another. There has been a progress in Piety, in Morality, and in the Theories of these two. Of course, then, there has been a progress in the visible results of this development of the religious faculties. The progress appears in the rise, decline, and disappearance of various forms of religion. Each of these has been necessary to the welfare of the human race; for at one time it represented the highest development of the persons who embraced that form of religion. As the science of a nation represents its intellectual development, so the form of religion shows how far men have got on in their piety and morality. But as each form of religion, when it is once established, is a thing which is fixed and does not change, and as the religious faculties are not fixed, but go on with increasing power from age to age, so it happens that men must necessarily outgrow any specific and imperfect form of religion whatever, just as they outgrow each specific and imperfect form of science. Human nature continually transcends the fact of human history; so new schemes of science, new forms of religion, continually crowd off the old."§

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* Combe's *Constitution of Man*, p. 17. † *Christian Theism*, p. 68.

‡ Comte's *Positive Philosophy*. Vol. II. p. 186.

§ *Theism, Atheism, and the Popular Theology*, p. 51.

THAT THE PRINCIPLE ON WHICH LEAVES NO SUFFICENT GROUND FOR BE-

XVIII.

**There is not ground for supposing the present a scene of probation.**

According, then, to the last section, "if this world be all, the divine administration in many points is more hopelessly opposed to our moral instincts and to all our notions of equity and benevolence, than any thing on which 'spiritualists' are accustomed to justify their censure of Scripture."* This is the strongest argument which natural religion can furnish for another life; but where is the basis on which it can rest, when, as has been shown, the evidences of Divine goodness are wanting,—when the marks of Divine interest in the individual welfare of men, which only would warrant the expectation, are not to be found in nature? The personal love and providential care of the gracious Father who wills not that "one of his little ones should perish," is attested in the Gospel of Jesus Christ alone. And it is only by the spirit of this Gospel, as already urged, that natural theologians, Butler and a hundred others, both Christians and unbelievers, use language like the following:—"As our present condition can in no wise be shown inconsistent with the perfect moral government of God: so Religion teaches us we were placed in it, that we might qualify ourselves, by the practice of virtue, for another state which is to follow it. . The known end why we are placed in a state of so much affliction, hazard, and difficulty, is, our improvement in virtue and piety, as the requisite qualification for a future state of security and happiness."† By Religion, and Christian religion alone, is this end really *known* by us. When we see processes of improvement going on, suddenly cut short by death, making fruitless the efforts that carry on the mind inevitably to expect future fulfilment, we have no reason in Nature for not classing this with other abortive attempts, failures, which are never repaired, but left to die out, while instantly replaced by beginning over again on a new stock. We have no reason in Nature to suppose that God cares more for the untimely end of a good man, than for the happy young animals devoured by a beast of prey, or for the luxuriant foliage snapped by the storm. It is nothing that in our eyes the man is a so much nobler creature,—nature can make plenty more!

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* *Eclipse of Faith,* p. 391. † Butler's *Analogy.* Part I. ch. v. p. 113.

CHRISTIANITY IS REJECTED,

LIEVING IN THE IMMORTALITY OF MAN.

XVIII. Progress, indeed, is for the race; improvement, in the view of Nature, is for the whole, and for individuals only as parts of the whole. They have the benefit of the good that belongs to all, and they must each contribute their mite of good to the general stock. According to the immortal aphorism of Pascal,* "the entire succession of men, through the whole course of ages, must be regarded as one man, always living and incessantly learning." The perfection of human nature can only be attained, when the individuality of its component parts being completed, it is again merged in the indissoluble union of society. "We cannot fully appreciate a phenomenon which is for ever proceeding before our eyes, and in which we bear a part; but if we withdraw ourselves in thought from the social system, and contemplate it as from afar, can we conceive of a more marvellous spectacle, in the whole range of natural phenomena, than the regular and constant convergence of an innumerable multitude of human beings, each possessing a distinct, and, in a certain degree, independent existence, and yet incessantly disposed, amidst all their discordance of talent and character, to concur in many ways in the same general development, without concert, and even consciousness on the part of most of them, who believe that they are merely following their personal impulses? This is the scientific picture of the phenomenon: and no temporary disturbances can prevent its being, under all circumstances, essentially true."† Under such an enlarged view as this, man loses his selfishness, becomes less irritable, restless, and suffering. But the Christian religion keeps attention centered within self.‡ To "practise virtue in order to qualify ourselves for heaven," is a selfish calculation which all the analogy of nature shows as likely to end in disappointment. When do we do good hoping for reward here, that the reward comes in the form we expect it? What parent, training his child for an ideal career in his own mind, as we would train our souls, ever finds his visionary anticipations realized? The education going on here is to fortify our minds to act bravely on principles established by the wise consent of mankind, which, surely as they are right and true, bring their own reward with them. Does any one need a bribe to eat when he is hungry? Impediments may indeed occur to prevent the enjoyment even of this natural reward; but these should only stimulate men to remove them, and their proper use is to serve as a discipline to strengthen the mind to do without it. If the reward we are accustomed to receive and reasonably expect for good actions, be only deferred to the future, then to be paid with incalculable interest, the discipline is lost, and the whole lesson of nature is perverted. So even in the extreme lesson of human disappointment,—in the loss of dear friends,—perhaps the good that should result from the

* Quoted in *Positive Philosophy*, Vol. II. p. 54. † *Ibid*, Vol. II. p. 140.

‡ Christianity is said to be a system of self-abnegation, because it merges our own Will in the Will of God; but this is a mere shifting of words, when the Will of God is declared to be our personal salvation.

XIX.

As an explanatory hypothesis, a future life is not satisfactory enough to maintain itself.

It is only as an *hypothesis* to meet the above difficulties, that the belief in another life can be held by natural reason: but it is too far from really removing those difficulties, to maintain itself on that ground.

"The argument which proceeds on the disorder and irregularity apparent in the present world, and the necessity of a future state of retribution, to vindicate the divine justice, would be indeed most satisfactory, if it involved a solution of the great and perplexing question (intimately connected with it) respecting the origin of Evil; but though it may seem to remove the difficulty one step further off, it does not in any degree explain or lessen it; the expectation that at the day of harvest the tares shall be rooted up and burnt, does not at all explain why they were allowed to be sown among the wheat. That there *are* wicked men, experience teaches us; and that they shall be punished, the Scriptures teach us; nor is there any ground for cavilling at this doctrine, since it involves no *greater* difficulty than the other, which we cannot but admit; but it does not *explain* the fact; nor are we therefore authorized to infer, *à priori*, independent of Revelation, a future state of retribution, from the irregularities prevailing in the present life; since that future state does not account fully for those irregularities. It may explain indeed how present evil may be conducive to future good; but not, why the good could not be attained without the evil: it may reconcile with our notions of the divine justice, the present prosperity of the wicked; but it does not account for the existence of the wicked."*

XX.

There is no proof of immortality in the material world, or in natural human experience.

There is scarcely any one at the present day who will attach weight to the evidence in the material world for human immortality. Nature, to the eye of science, offers no analogy, or remotest sign of life renewed after death. Such fanciful symbols as that of the butterfly typifying the soul, emerging to a heavenly existence from its mortal prison-house, the beautiful Psyche of Grecian imagination, show merely how poetry strives to fulfil the longings of poor human nature, where there is no real provision for their gratification. From all that our senses tell us, from all that we *see* and *know*, the individual creature perishes, while only the race survives. The component atoms of the body are scattered in dissolution, to be re-compounded in other forms: and what does nature tell us of the soul apart from the body?—Surviving friends see the beloved departed in dreams,—nay, behold them in waking visions; the mighty power of affection melts the hardest Infidel, and he that would not accept the testimony of the Holy Spirit if it contradicted his reason, yields himself—all the more!—credulous to the grossest superstition! His nature *demands* communication with the unseen world, and having denied the true, he must needs betake himself to the false. But inexorable Science drives him from his unlawful resources; tries the spirits, and confesses that none can re-appear on earth save by the express permission of Him

* Whately's Essay on the *Revelation of a future state*, pp. 68-70.

heart's agony, is frustrated by the attempts at consolation,—generally resisted by nature,—in the promise of meeting again. "Man is born to sorrow," and must bear his pain in a manly way, without self-deceit and flattery.

But Nature, truly looked upon, is not unsympathetic to his woes: when that which is precious is cut off, no mourner is alone in his grief. Nature, the God of Nature, gives him support and solace in the pity and love of his fellow-men. How can Nature be called unfeeling, when this tenderness in human breasts is her most bountiful and most beautiful production?

XIX. The following considerations confirm the insufficiency of the hypothesis:—

"Since we can only judge of the attributes of God by what we see and know of His works, are we not bound to admit, that if He cannot be proved to be just with respect to this world, there is no evidence that He will be so in another? Admitting, however, that justice is proved to be the actuating principle of the Deity, . . who, upon the plea of justice, must become the inhabitants of heaven? The wicked, *not* the good. For . . the wicked man has already suffered from a great deficiency of happiness in the present state; and such having been the lot assigned to him here, ought he still to be among the most unhappy in another world? This question is answered by many in the affirmative, on the ground that punishment in another state will have the same benevolent object that it has here, viz., reformation; and that by its means, evil-doers will be fitted for the enjoyment of eternal bliss, to which the preparatory suffering will bear no comparison. But it must be of long duration . . . and if we may, without irreverence, employ reason upon such a subject, the painful process would appear to be perfectly gratuitous; as, in the re-organization of a being for a future state, the leaving out of the causes that led to vice would seem to be the most direct means of amendment. Such causes we have seen to be dependent upon the organization of the individual, and the circumstances in which he is placed. The propensities, sentiments, and intellectual faculties of which the mind consists, are, so far as respects the majority of them, adapted only to a world like the present; and if a future state is to be unlike the present, they also must undergo a corresponding alteration. . . Many of our mental faculties will have no use . . the knowledge acquired on earth will be unavailing. Why then must a long probation in a future state be necessary? Why, in the re-organization that *must* take place, could not the mind be divested of those qualities that have led to vice here, without the aid of suffering? Or might we not even ask, why would not the creation of another more perfect being answer the benevolent design of the Creator, as well as the re-organization of the same?"*

Still, however unable we may be to form a perfect hypothesis upon the subject, there is no reason which can compel us so to do violence to our instinctive notions of justice, as to deny the possibility that the scheme of retribution, manifestly at present incomplete to our apprehension, may in fact be accomplishing their fulfilment, and in time so evolve itself as to make apparent the equitable adjustment of individual as well as general good.

* *Philosophy of Necessity*, Vol. I. pp. 235-7.

who has them all in His keeping. Except those specially ordained and proclaimed as miraculous, no instance of supposed communication with the world of spirits has ever yet stood a really critical and scientific examination.*

XXI. Nor in the nature of the Soul.

The proof of immortality does not depend upon the question of the materiality or immateriality of the soul; since we have no means of knowing that an *immaterial* substance could preserve a conscious identity when separated from the body; neither can we say that it is impossible for a *material* substance to be endued with immortality. As Locke has argued,† it is not to be denied that God can impart such an attribute to matter if it please him; but that he has done so, certainly, we have no means of knowing—except that he *has told us.*

"It is not unlikely, that in thus depreciating the power of unassisted reason to ascertain the truth of a future life, I shall be suspected of favouring some opinions against which much clamour has been raised, viz: that the Soul is naturally mortal—incapable of an existence continued after our dissolution, except from the express decree of the Creator; and that it is a Material Substance, or an Attribute of Matter. It were to be wished that those who have agitated these questions (and indeed many others) had begun by distinctly ascertaining what they were disputing about: which neither of the parties appear to have attended to. For my own part, I must frankly acknowledge, that I do not understand the questions. If by 'nature' is meant the course in which the Author and Governor of all things proceeds in his works, (which is the only meaning I am able to attach to it,) then, to say that the souls of men, if God has appointed that they shall exist for ever, are naturally immortal, is not only an undeniable, but an identical proposition: it is only saying that the appointments of Omnipotence will surely take effect. If on the other hand, when it is said that the Soul is naturally mortal, nothing more is meant than that its existence is maintained after death solely by the agency of divine power; this also I should be disposed not only fully to admit, but to extend to our present existence also; 'for in God we live, and move, and have our being:' I cannot myself conceive what are called *physical causes* to possess *power*, in the strict sense of the word; or to be capable of maintaining, more than of first producing, the system of the universe; whose continued existence, no less than its origin, seems to me to to depend on the continual

* [This, of course, is matter of individual judgment: the opinion is expressed here, because it is conceived to be the most strictly in harmony with the belief in Revelation as a dispensation of special miracle. Some Christians, indeed, have eagerly accepted the pretended spiritual manifestations as confirmatory of the Scripture miracles; but it is believed they must soon see that their zeal has hurried them into a mistake that endangers their cause.]

† Locke on the *Human Understanding.* Book IV. ch. III. sec. 6. See his first Letter to the Bishop of Worcester.

THE IMMORTALITY OF MAN.]

XX. It is probably true, that experience has yet furnished no indication of the possibility of conscious identity continued after apparent dissolution; but still it would be rash to conclude that therefore such can never be discovered.

XXI. The reasoning opposite sets the question on a firm footing: it is futile to debate upon *causes* and the *real nature* of things, either (so-called) material or spiritual, since we are unable to comprehend them. We have only to observe the tendency of the operations going on around and within us; and hitherto the insight we have obtained by this means into the constitution of Mind, or Soul, does not permit us to do more than speculate concerning its destination.

Mr. Parker, who believes in a future life on the ground that it is necessary in order to make intelligible the benevolent purpose of Deity, consistently extends the belief to the immortality of the lower animals. "I do not see how this benevolent purpose can be accomplished unless all animals are immortal and find retribution in another life. . The ultimate welfare must come to the mutilated beast overtasked by some brutal man. If it be not so, then the universe is not a perfect world; it is imperfect in this particular, that it does not serve the natural purpose of these creatures, who go incomplete and suffering. . I know many will think it foolish, and some impious, to speak of the immortality of animals. But without this supposition I cannot 'vindicate the ways of God' to the horse and the ox. To me the immortality of all animals appears in harmony with the analogy of Nature, rational, benevolent, and beautiful. The argument from consciousness is here out of place—as man knows nothing of the consciousness of the sheep and swine. There are but two arguments which I have ever heard brought against the immortality of animals—one is drawn from the selfishness of man, who wants a monopoly of all desirable things, and so would shut beast and bird out of heaven; the other comes from the common notion of the Deity, that He is a mean and stingy God, making heaven little and hell large. Let both pass for what they are worth."*

* *Theism, Atheism, and the Popular Theology*, p. 198.

operation of the great Creator. The Laws of Nature, as they are called, presuppose (as Dr. Paley remarks) an Agent; since they are 'the modes in which that Agent operates;' they cannot be the cause of their own observance. . . The question, again, respecting the Materiality of the soul, is one which I am also at a loss to understand clearly, till it shall have been clearly determined *what matter is.* We know nothing of it, any more than of Mind, except its Attributes; and (let it not be forgotten) the most remarkable of these are not ascertained. Whether Gravitation be an essential quality of matter is still a question, and likely to remain so, among natural philosophers; who accordingly are divided in opinion whether those commonly called *imponderable* Substances, Heat, Light, and Electricity, are Substances at all, or not. At any rate, let not the truths of Religion be rested on any decision respecting subtle questions which belong to the Natural-philosopher or Metaphysician, not the Theologian; nor let our hopes in God's promises be mixed up with debates about Extension, and Gravitation, and Form. The Scriptures in these points leave us just where they found us; giving no explanation of the nature of the Soul, but giving us instead, what is far more important, an assurance that we are destined to live for ever. That this is *impossible,* and that no revelation is to be received, however attested, which contains this doctrine, we may be assured no metaphysical arguments will ever prove; and it is, on the other hand, I think, equally out of the power of metaphysical arguments to prove the contrary;—to establish, without the aid of divine revelation, the *certainty* of a future immortality: for if otherwise, whence is it that the wisest of men, when fairly left to themselves, never did arrive at the conclusion, by any arguments which were satisfactory even to themselves? For it should not be forgotten, among other considerations, that none of those who contend for the natural immortality of the Soul, on the ground of its distinct nature from the Body,—its incapability of decomposition, &c. have been able to extricate themselves from one difficulty, viz.: that all their arguments apply, with exactly the same force, to prove an immortality not only of *brutes,* but even of *plants;* though in such a conclusion as this, they were never willing to acquiesce."*

XXII.

Men's instincts are too various to establish it.

The hopes and expectations of men relative to a future life form indeed a natural argument in its favour, but one which perhaps has been very much over-stated, if not misrepresented. It is not to be assumed as undoubted that this desire was not originally specially imparted in a supernatural manner: in which case the whole system of the Infidel is false. Butler says,† "there is express historical or traditional evidence as ancient as history, of the system of Religion being taught mankind by revelation. . And whoever will consider how unapt for speculation rude and unculti-

* Whately's *Essays,* pp. 63-67.

† *Analogy,* Part I. ch. VI. pp. 145, 144. See Locke's *Reasonableness of Christianity.* Ed. 1810. p. 218.

XXII. The following are specimens of the different feelings with which this doctrine is regarded by Theistic writers:

"Fear not, then, to regard this earth as the appointed sphere of man's chief thoughts, exertions, and interests. To enjoy and promote happiness on this planet is the simple and pleasing obligation laid upon him by the Creator through the irresistible voice of his own constitution. If he obey nature, and frame his whole conduct according to her easy command, developed in details as enlightened intellect may suggest, he is sure to be promoting the end of his being.. Indulge thyself especially, as far as it is given thee, in the enjoyment which God himself seems to delight in, of creating happiness. And when the foreseen signal of departure arrives, give a glance of contented retrospection on a well-spent and well-enjoyed life, welcome the new comers into thy place, and sink peacefully into nature's arms.—More is there than this? Nature is silent. Enough has she given man to occupy him on earth; she withdraws not yet the veil from what lies beyond, but bids him wait in calm implicit faith. Or if, pressed urgently by the affections which she herself has implanted in him, man seems to acquire a right to some answer, and demands if the friend of many years is now really no more than a remembrance,—she points with quiet significance to man's own heart, and to her own continual lesson, that the creator of that heart is good. Man takes consolation from the hint: amongst the white memorials of mortality he finds thought still pleasing, though solemn and severe, and, amidst yew and cypress shades, catches animating glimpses of the remote bright stars and serene heaven. Spirits of the wise and good! noblest work of all creation! are ye not worth preserving in the sight of God? The wisdom and benevolence which shine forth in all that we can already see of the universe, suggest, that for you there is still some place to occupy, and some work to be done, in the immense regions of the unseen."*

"..We discern some probability (increasing with the strength of Faith in the goodwill of God to perfect us more and more,) that the highest state which the soul here reaches, is not and cannot be meant by God as its ultimate and absolutely highest; but that his work begun in it must needs go on towards perfection, unchecked by the limit which we call Death. Undoubtedly, if we reason from the analogies of organic nature, we shall come to an opposite conclusion; but spiritual action in many respects is quite peculiar, and especially in this, that we cannot conceive of God tying himself (so to say) by general laws, so as to deal otherwise with *this* soul than He would have done if it had been the only soul in the universe... It remains as a thing not manifestly refused by God. For this therefore, from time to time, the Spirit within pleads, and knows that it will be accepted in asking, even if the prayer be ignorant. But unless some clear conviction can be gained, that the thing asked is *according to the will of God*, the soul cannot have confidence that the petition will be fulfilled; and to ascertain this by direct vision, is (to me hitherto) impossible: for to our blind eyes many things seem easy, which Almighty wisdom

* Hennell's *Christian Theism*, 1st Ed. 1839, pp. 79-80.

vated minds are, will, perhaps from hence alone, be strongly inclined to believe it the truth." This appears to many the only sufficient means of accounting for the general concurrence of mankind in this belief; which, having become dim by the lapse of time and subject to the action of human reason, deteriorated and diverged into the wildest forms. Thus varied, it has indeed been a part of all religious systems, (all of which may have been derived, through some channel, from the original divine source,) and by means of them it has been diffused amongst all but the most savage nations. Whether, otherwise, the mass of the people would have conceived the idea for themselves, we cannot say. Judging from the uneducated population of our own country, the probability would seem in the negative. And this supposition of the uncertainty of the natural instinct is confirmed by the very opposite opinions acknowledged by thoughtful unbelievers who have thrown themselves unreservedly upon it:—showing, indeed, the utter unreliableness of human "intuition" to establish any religious doctrine, since it can come to no definite conclusion even with regard to this which has been most vehemently claimed as representing the all but universal voice of nature.

XXIII. The ancients had a very vague notion of it.

The doctrine of a future state amongst the common people of the ancient Grecians was very vague and unpractical; more like the result of notions inculcated by priests who, whether believing them themselves or not, thought them good for the people, than like the innate idea of their own minds. "We find Socrates and his disciples represented by Plato as fully admitting, that 'men in general were highly incredulous as to the soul's future existence,' and as expecting that 'it would, at the moment of our natural death, be dispersed (as he expresses it) like air or smoke, and cease altogether to exist, so that it would require no little persuasion and argument to convince them that the soul can exist after death, and can retain any thing of its powers and intelligence;'—when we find this, I say, asserted, or rather alluded to, as notoriously the state of popular opinion, we can surely entertain but little doubt that the accounts of Tartarus and Elysium were regarded as mere poetical fables, calculated to amuse the imagination, but unworthy of serious belief."* Confirmation of this is given in Thucydides' account of the behaviour of the Athenians during the great pestilence, and in the oration of Pericles to the friends of those fallen in battle, who "when represented as exhausting every topic of consolation, speaks of their glorious memory, and of the hope of other sons to be born, who may fill their place, and emulate their worth; but adds not one word of their future life and immortality."† Similarly, later, amongst the Romans, "we find the younger Pliny, in his account of the eruption of Vesuvius, recording the excitement of a feeling not unlike that of the Athenians in the plague; viz.: a general distrust of divine aid, arising from the notion, that the gods themselves were possibly involved in the impending ruin."‡

* Whately's *Essays*, p. 35. † *Ibid*, p. 49. Thucyd. lib. II. c. 35, *et seq.*
‡ *Ibid*, p. 50.

knows cannot be granted; and while the intellect hesitates on this point, the soul dares not to dogmatize. Confidence thus there is none, and Aspiration is her higher state. But then, there is herein nothing whatever to distress her: no cloud of grief crosses the area of her vision, as she gazes upward: for *if her Lord, infinite in love and wisdom, sees that it cannot be, she herself could not wish it.* While in such vigour of life as to have any insight into God's mind, she is also in vigour enough to trample selfishness under foot."*

"The doctrine of eternal life is always popular. If you were to poll the world to-day and get the ayes and noes of all mankind, 999 out of every 1000 would give their vote for immortality. Yet few have ever reasoned about it much, and demonstrated their immortality. Most men think that they take it on trust from the mouth of their priest, or from 'revelation,'—the Christians from the Bible, the Mahometans from the Koran. But it is not so; we do not take it on trust from a man. Like what else comes from the primitive instincts of the human heart, we take it on trust from the Father; from no less authority.—I mention these things to show, first, how deep is the instinct of immortality in our heart, for all nations above the nakedness of the savage have fastened their hopes on this; they have dug down to this primitive rock, never very far from the surface: and next, to show how strong it is, which even the fear of the future eternal torment cannot annihilate. For 16 or 1800 years the Christian Church has preached the doctrine of immortality in such a form that it is only another name for the wrath of God and eternal torment to the mass of men; but with all this preaching it has not preached the belief thereof out of the heart of man, and it cannot. . . The leading philosophers of Europe seem to have small faith in immortality; some positively deny it; a few mock at it. Many of the enlightened Germans say all belief therein is a misfortune, for it clouds over men's happiness now with fear of future torment, hinders their progress, and makes them believe that virtue and justice are not good for their own sake, but only as means to another end. There is a great deal of truth in their objections no doubt; but they all apply only to a false idea of immortality and a wrong use of it; not at all against the true doctrine itself. . Immortality has kept the field against Augustine and Jerome, the Basils, the Gregories and Bernard; has held its own, spite of Aquinas and Calvin and Edwards and Hopkins and Emmons, and I think it can laugh at Strauss and Comte and Feuerbach. Has it not in its time heard lions roar, and yet held its own against the hell of the church? Do you think then it has anything to fear from the earth of the material philosophers?"†

XXIII. The instinct that suggests immortality belongs to the higher faculties of man, and is naturally undeveloped in rude minds. Besides, the disposition of the Grecians was one that delighted in the present, in warm, genial, earthly life, and shrank from the cold dreamy existence of the shades, as represented by the idealism of their poets. Their animal courage too, with their love of fame and noble patriotism, sinking their regard for self

* Newman on the *Soul*, 1st Ed. 1849, pp. 193-4.

† Parker's *Theism, Atheism, and the Popular Theology*, 1853, pp. 155 6; 159.

And even amongst the Grecian philosophers, (as already argued,*) the immortality of man was not more than an uncertain speculation. "In reality, the doctrine never was either generally admitted among them, or satisfactorily proved by any of them, even in the opinion of those who argued in favour of it... The arguments commonly employed by them, (and also by such deists of the present day as admit the doctrine,) viz: the distinct nature of the soul from the corruptible body with which it is united—the vigour and energy which the soul sometimes manifests when the body is in the lowest state of exhaustion, &c., led them naturally to the inference, that the soul will continue to exist after death in a *separate* state, never to be re-united with matter. They represented the body as a kind of prison of the spiritual part, from which it was to be released by death; and the soul accordingly would energize, they supposed, more freely, and enjoy the happiness of more exalted contemplation, when freed from its connexion with gross material substance... But the very notion of the soul's immortality, as explained by them, involved the complete destruction of distinct personal existence. Their notion was (I mean, when they spoke their real sentiments; for in their *exoteric* or popular works they often inculcate, for the benefit of the vulgar, the doctrine of future retribution, which they elsewhere laugh at,) that the soul of each man is a portion of that Spirit which pervades the Universe, to which it is re-united at death, and becomes again an undistinguishable part of the great whole; just as the body is resolved into the general mass of matter. So that their immortality, or rather eternity, of the soul, was anterior as well as posterior; as it was to have no end, so it had no beginning; and the boasted continuance of existence, which according to this system we are to expect after death, consists in returning to the *state in which we were before birth;* which, every one must perceive, is the same thing, virtually, with annihilation. Let it be remembered then, when the arguments of the heathen Sages are triumphantly brought forward in proof of the soul's immortality, that when they countenanced the doctrine of future retribution, they taught, with a view to political expediency, what they did not themselves believe; and that when they spoke their real sentiments on the subject, the eternity of existence which they expected, as it implied the destruction of all distinct personality, amounted, practically, to nothing at all."†

XXIV.

Considered as a reward of Virtue, it encourages interested motives; not so, as a gift of God.

The Christian Scriptures alone afford the *assurance* of immortality; and they afford it inasmuch as they describe it as "the *gift* of God through Jesus Christ." This certainty alone makes the doctrine practical, and efficient as a motive, and this description of it alone makes that motive pure and disinterested. To say, as is said by a large proportion of Deists, as well as by many Christians, that

* Part I. A. XXIX. † Whately's *Essays*, pp. 54, 55, 61-63.

in their country's honour, caused them to have little dread of death, and little need of the belief in another life.* The contemplative mind of the East was much better adapted to it; and it harmonized entirely with the notions of the Hebrew captives, disappointed of the temporal glory which they expected as the favourites of heaven. They held the doctrine, however, in a form that is alien to our modes of thought; so that when Christianity sealed it up as a divine truth that the body is to rise as well as the soul, with other local accompanying beliefs, it delivered the doctrine in a form that makes it now incredible to minds of average intelligence; whereas, otherwise, the natural feeling would doubtless have embodied itself amongst us in a form, which would at least have been consonant to the state of religion and science of the day.†

XXIV. Comte says: "Religious, and especially Christian resignation is, in plain truth, only a prudent temporizing, which enjoins the endurance of present suffering in view of an ultimate ineffable felicity. A true resignation,—that is, a permanent disposition to endure, steadily, and without hope of compensation, all inevitable evils, can proceed only from a deep sense of the connection of all kinds of natural phenomena with invariable laws."‡ Every supposed interruption to these laws is an impediment to moral improvement; every supposed addition to increase their efficacy, weakens their real effect. The natural consequences of actions are sufficient to cause virtuous conduct and character, without any superadded reward or punishment; —which in human affairs, as principle becomes more enlightened and moral feeling more delicate, are increasingly perceived to be out of place and mischievous: as a benevolent man of refinement would feel insulted by the offer of a medal for saving the life of a drowning fellow-creature, and as philanthropic legislators abhor to inflict upon criminals any degree of gratuitous suffering;—and which, supposed to be in reserve for another world, are proportionately injurious in so far as they are practically borne in mind and relied on. Every clear exposition of what justice requires in respect of retribution, (as on the opposite page,) shows only the more how the ideas attached to Christianity are extraneous and therefore pernicious. If justice cannot be carried out, is not intended to be carried out, on the Christian scheme, but on the contrary our future weal and woe are to be a pure boon, or a pure infliction, dependent on the personal will and pleasure of God,—and, be it remembered, if eternal happiness can never be *merited* by man, neither can eternal pain,—then is the idea of retribution altogether set aside, and its moral effect counteracted. If heaven and hell be not what we have a *right* to expect, they are stupendous immoral influences, drawing us away from the legitimate dominion of conscience.——If, indeed, we had truly reason to expect that the natural consequences of our actions would be continued to ourselves to eternity, it would doubtless infinitely increase their importance to us; and if Nature intended this immortal prolongation

* See *Reports of Lectures* by W. J. Fox. *An Inquiry into the History of Opinion concerning Death, and the Mental state induced by its approach.* Lecture II. 1838.

† See *antè*, Part I, O. XXIX. ‡ *Positive Philosophy*, Vol. II. p. 45.

there is a natural and necessary connection between a virtuous life and eternal happiness after death, is indeed to make virtue a mere matter of prudence and self-interest; but the Christian view of it tends to fill the whole soul with that love and aspiration towards God, which imply the entire abnegation of self.

"Reason as well as revelation shews, that for man to expect to earn for himself, by the practice of virtue, and claim as his just right, an immortality of exalted happiness, is a most extravagant and groundless pretension. It would indeed be no greater folly and presumption to contend, that the brutes are able by their own effort to exalt themselves to rationality.—In the case indeed of some eminent personages of antiquity, the arrogant hope seems to have been cherished by themselves or their followers, that their great exploits and noble qualities would raise them after death into the number of the gods; and this is precisely the expectation we are speaking of: for it should be remembered, that by the term which we translate 'God,' the ancient heathens understood, not, as we do, the Author and Governor of all things, but merely, a Being of a nature superior to man, perfect, happy, and immortal; such, in short, as the Christian hopes to become after death. Now to pretend that man is naturally capable of raising himself to this state—of thus elevating himself into a god—is surely no less extravagant than to suppose that a brute is qualified to exalt itself into a rational Being... Nor does the belief in a Deity who is the Moral-Governor of the Universe, in reality alter the case so much as many seem to suppose; for if by the practice of virtue man were entitled to claim such a reward from the justice of God, he might strictly and properly be said to earn and acquire it for himself, as a labourer his wages. Men are apt indeed to speak of the justice of the Deity as leading him to the rewarding of virtue, as well as the punishing of sin, in the next world, (considering such reward and punishment as the natural consequence of each respectively,) as if the two cases were *parallel*; whereas in truth they are even inconsistent with each other: for a man deserves reward only for doing something *beyond his bounden duty*—something, consequently, which he would not deserve punishment for omitting. This obvious rule of justice every one assents to in human affairs: no positive rewards are proposed to men by legislators for merely fulfilling their engagements, and paying their debts; though if they fail to do so, punishments are denounced; those, on the other hand, who voluntarily devote their fortunes, their services, or their persons, to the public good, we consider as worthy to be rewarded by riches, honours, or rank; while no one ever thought of denouncing punishment for the mere absence of such munificent liberality and generous public spirit; which indeed would lose their very name and character by the attempt to make them compulsory. In no case, in short, does justice dictate reward to be placed on the one side of an alternative, and punishment on the other."*

* Whately's *Essays*, pp. 101-104.

of our individual existence, she would doubtless also have intended that our-Selves should be infinitely important and dear to us :—and how can it be called "folly or arrogance" to have such faith in the Divine power of Nature as to believe that thus conditioned "the brute might, by his own efforts, exalt himself to rationality," and "the man elevate himself to a god"?—But Nature indulges no such proud anticipations except for the species; the individual she seems to wish *not* to concentre his whole care upon himself:—*nec sibi sed toti genitum se credere mundo*, is the motto of natural religion.

The desire for immortality as an eternal enjoyment of God's love, which is thought to be an abnegation of self, is on the contrary thus represented by Feuerbach :—"The heavenly life, or what we do not here distinguish from it—personal immortality, is a characteristic doctrine of Christianity. It is certainly in part to be found among the heathen philosophers; but with them it had only the significance of a subjective conception, because it was not connected with their fundamental view of things. How contradictory, for example, are the expressions of the Stoics on this subject! It was among the Christians that personal immortality first found that principle whence it follows as a necessary and obvious consequence. The contemplation of the world, of Nature, of the race, was always coming athwart the ancients; they distinguished between the principle of life and the living subject, between the soul, the mind, and self: whereas the Christian abolished the distinction between soul and person, species and individual, and therefore placed immediately in self what belongs only to the totality of the species. But the immediate unity of the species and individuality, is the highest principle, the God of Christianity,—in it the individual has the significance of the absolute being,—and the necessary, immanent consequence of this principle is personal immortality. Or rather: the belief in personal immortality is perfectly identical with the belief in a personal God;—*i.e.*, that which expresses the belief in the heavenly, immortal life of the person, expresses God also, as he is an object to Christians, namely, as absolute, unlimited personality. . The belief in the immortality of man is the belief in the divinity of man, and the belief in God is the belief in pure personality, released from all limits, and consequently *eo ipso* immortal. . The doctrine of immortality is the final doctrine of religion; its testament, in which it declares its last wishes. Here therefore it speaks out undisguisedly what it has hitherto suppressed. If elsewhere the religious soul concerns itself with the existence of another being, here it openly considers only its own existence; if elsewhere in religion man makes his existence dependent on the existence of God, he here makes the reality of God dependent on his own reality; and thus what elsewhere is a primitive, immediate truth to him, is here a derivative, secondary truth: if I am not immortal, God is not God, if there is no immortality, there is no God;—a conclusion already drawn by the apostle Paul. If we do not rise again, then Christ is not risen, and all is vain. Let us eat and drink. . . God is the guarantee of my future existence,

XXV.

**It is the most animating of human motives.**

The "spiritualist" argues that "he who loves God without any thought of heaven, must be more unselfish than he who hopes for it." But, "religious love and hope will with difficulty exist in such an atmosphere as is thus created. It is a sublime altitude doubtless of transcendental virtue, to which also Shaftesbury, and some few other Deists have already aspired; but no ordinary 'spiritual' beings can breathe that rarefied air. Once leave a man to conclude, or even to suspect that he and his cat end together, and if a bad man, he will gladly accept a release from every claim but that of his passions and appetites (the effects being more or less philosophically calculated according to his intellectual power); while the best man would be liable to contemplate God and religion with a depressed and faltering heart. He would be apt to lose all energy; he would feel it impossible to repress doubts of the infinite wisdom of Him (whatever he might think of his power) who had given him the soul of a man and the life of a butterfly; conceptions and aspirations so totally disproportioned to the evanescence of his being! If, however, it be really thought that the hopes of an immortality of virtuous happiness will stand in the way of a sublime disinterestedness of spirituality, it ought to be recollected that *any* expectation of happiness, even for a day, will, in its measure, have the same effect."*

THAT THE PRINCIPLE ON WHICH

LEAVES NO SUFFICIENT GROUND FOR BE-

XXVI.

**A God not communicating himself, is no God to us.**

In Revelation, and in revelation alone, God makes himself known to us as a Being whom we can love and worship;† and with the belief in revelation the only proper proof of the existence of such a Being falls to the ground. We may indeed conceive of a mighty Intelligence abiding apart from creation, and ruling by general laws; but we can be no object of interest to Him, nor He to us, except as of wonder and curiosity. If He wished to be loved and honoured by us, he must have made himself known to us. If he has not done so in Christianity, then assuredly not in any other form in the past history of man, nor in any to be anticipated in future. We can regard him with no other feeling than that of the ancients, who doubted whether he took concern in human affairs, whether mankind were as his plaything and sport, or objects of entire indifference. Piety has existed only where revelation has been believed in:—in a rude, child-like form amongst the Hebrews, in an abused form amongst the Mahomedans,—genuinely and rationally only amongst Christians.

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* *Eclipse of Faith*, p. 389. † See *antè*, Part I. A. IV.

because he is already the certainty and reality of my present existence, my salvation, my trust, my shield from the forces of the external world; hence I need not expressly deduce immortality, or prove it as a separate truth, for if I have God, I have immortality also. Thus it was with the more profound Christian mystics; to them the idea of immortality was involved in the idea of God; God was their immortal life,—God himself their subjective blessedness: he was for them, for their consciousness, what he is in himself, that is, in the essence of religion."*

XXV. What we have to consider is not what it would be most agreeable to us to believe, but what is true. Accustomed as we have been to regard a future life as a certain possession in store for us—and very few acknowledge themselves to be of the number of those to whom it would be a curse and not a blessing,—it seems to most of us one that cannot be dispensed with, the denial of it as a cruel defrauding us of what is necessary to our content of mind. But there can be no good, there must be harm in deceiving ourselves: if the doctrine is not true, we *can* do without it,—we *must* do without it;—and we shall probably find that we are in fact better without it. If, after all, there should be some kind of truth in the doctrine at present unthought of,—in which case it will be undoubtedly good for man to know,—it will reveal itself in time to the patient student of Nature. Meanwhile, we have to think less of the securing of our happiness, and more of "*doing the duty that is nearest to us.*"†

## CHRISTIANITY IS REJECTED,
## LIEVING IN THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

XXVI. But "Revelation", we believe, is NOT TRUE:—what then have we to do with its supposed advantages? Very vain indeed is it for us to lay out a plan of creation, and say, this suits us best, and therefore we will believe in it. If it is not the mighty irreversible fact, our most decided preference makes no difference at all in the matter. Because we do not find the God we want in heaven, can we be content with fashioning a false idol of our own imagination, and setting it up there instead? This sort of piety we think the world is much better without. Piety, as it showed itself in the earnest, unsophisticated, child-like mind of the race, was genuine and beautiful; but in becoming men we can no longer feel as children: and perhaps it is only a poetic superstition to think that the feelings of children are to be esteemed preferable to those of men.

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* *Essence of Christianity*, pp. 170-174.

† Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, 2d Ed. 1837, p. 201.

XXVII.

**Men have failed to discover him by philosophy, or by intuition.**

Man feels within himself the *need* of God; as soon as his mental powers have acquired any vigour, and he becomes conscious of himself, he begins to *feel after* God: —but to *find* Him is more than he can of himself attain. Though He be "not far from every one of us," yet He remains the "Unknown God" until an apostle "declare him unto us."* Grecian poetry might suggest, "we are his offspring," but the phrase had no real meaning till God sent his only-begotten Son to make it known. The most spiritual of Grecian philosophers thought, like "spiritualists" of our own day, that he had an intuition by which he could discern that God had an affinity with his own nature; but he had no confidence of finding such an intuition in mankind in general, which should make the idea intelligible to them. "It is a difficult thing," he says,† "to discover the nature of the Creator of the universe; and, being discovered, it is impossible, and would be even impious, to expose the discovery to vulgar understandings." For themselves, luxuriating in the noble exercise of dialectics, with self-admiring consciousness of the greatness and dignity of their own mental capacity, the idea of God as the "soul of the world" was sufficient for philosophers to debate upon, and to contemplate as an image of beauty; but to the people they knew they must speak of the "gods," with attributes that brought them near to the feelings of acting and suffering men. And as the Platonists, by meditating on their own souls, gained an image,—an imagination,—of an Infinite Soul, but *never did in fact,—as men* NEVER CAN,—*by themselves get beyond themselves;* so the Epicureans, by meditating on material atoms, attained to no idea of Divine Spirit at all,—though to the people they too spoke of "gods," very much to be revered, but not to be supposed willing to interrupt their own supreme content by the charge of a troublesome world. Certainly it is natural to men to believe in Deity; the great majority, if not the whole of mankind, confess it in their hopes and fears, and nearly as many in their intelligence; but they believe it only in *faith*, the disposition which leads men as children to receive the Word of God. There is an intuitive *desire* for knowledge of God, in the human breast, but it amounts not to *intuition*, to real knowledge. It seems to have been implanted within us expressly in order to prepare the way for revelation. It gives the impulse to reason, to make it try its powers on the theme all above its reach, that it may thereby show its insufficiency. Beyond the first proposition, that there must be *some* adequate cause for our own and the world's existence, to which unknown cause the name of "God" is given, there is nothing that Reason can predicate of Deity,—except mere negations, that He is *not* mortal, *not* finite—that is received as positive truth by universal consent. Not even is it uncontrovertible to all men's reason that God is not material; since it is truly said, that we know no more

* Acts XVII. 23, 27.

† Plato, *in Timæo*. Quoted in Enfield's *History of Philosophy*, 1819. Vol. I. p. 228.

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.]

XXVII. The method which has been pursued by philosophers in general, of assuming the existence of a Divine Being as a metaphysical hypothesis, which would enable them to solve the problems they have imposed on themselves, is entirely abandoned by those who take Science as the only legitimate basis for Reasoning. If by this which they believe to be the true Philosophy, nothing prove to be discoverable about God except the utter unfathomableness of the mystery, they must content themselves with their inevitable ignorance, seeing there is no other method by which, according to their conviction, they will not be misled.

"Metaphysical Philosophy and Positive Science are irreconcilable. The former aspires to the knowledge of *Essences* and *Causes;* the latter aspires only to the knowledge of *Laws.* The one pretends to discover *what things are* in themselves, apart from their appearances to sense, and whence they came. The other only wishes to discover their *modus operandi;* observing the constant *co-existences* and *successions* of phenomena amongst themselves, and generalizing them into some one *Law.* In other words, the one endeavours to compass the Impossible; the other knows the limits of human faculties, and contents itself with the Possible. . . It is a law of the human mind that speculations on all generalities begin deductively: and the only road to truth is to begin inductively. The origin of Positive Science is to be sought in Philosophy. The boldest and the grandest speculations came first. Man needed the stimulus of some higher reward than that of merely tracing the co-existences and successions of phenomena. Nothing but a solution of the mystery of the universe could content him; nothing less could tempt him to the labour of sustained speculation. Thus had Astronomy its first impulse given to it by astrologers. Nightly did the old Chaldeans watch the stars in the hope of wresting from them their secret influence over the destiny of man. Chemistry came from Alchemy; Physiology from Auguries. Many long and weary years, of long and weary struggles, were passed before men learned to suspect the vanity of their efforts. First came scepticism of human knowledge altogether. Next came scepticism of the Methods men had followed. *Induction* arose. Slowly and laboriously, but as surely as slowly, did this method lead men into the right path. Axioms were obtained: axioms that had stood the test of proof, that were adequate expressions of general facts, not simply dogmatical expressions of opinions. Deduction again resumed its office; this time to good purpose: it was no longer guess-work. . . The history of Science is the history of *progress.* Its methods are stamped with certainty, because they are daily extending our certain knowledge; because the immense experience of years and of myriads of intelligences confirms their truth, without casting a shadow of suspicion on them. Science progresses, and must continue to progress. Philosophy only moves in the same endless circle. Its first principles are as much a matter of dispute as they were 2000 years ago. It has made no progress, although in constant movement. Precisely the same questions are being agitated in Germany at this moment as were being discussed in ancient Greece; and with no better means of solving them, with no better hopes of success.

what matter is than spirit, neither have we any actual basis on which we can argue that the latter is the cause of the former; nay, it may well be urged, that if we cease to idealize, and turn from abstract conceptions to observation of nature, the analogy of the world would rather lead us to suppose that spirit is developed out of matter than the reverse. The instant men begin to define their idea of God, they meet with contradiction from other men's apprehensions; and the more they reason about their own idea, and endeavour to work it out, does it become an abstraction and an unreality to themselves. Philosophers in all ages have mutually hurled against those of opposite schools the charge of atheism; and not without honest cause. To the eye of religion it has always been apparent, that *mere philosophy is, and must necessarily be, atheistic.*

XXVIII. **His existence is not to be proved by the argument from Design.**

Mr. Rogers makes his sceptic say: "Even as to that fundamental position,—the existence of a Being of unlimited power and wisdom, (as to his unlimited *goodness*, I believe that nothing *but* an external revelation can absolutely certify us,) I feel that I am much more indebted to those inferences from *design*, which these writers (of the school of 'spiritualism') make so light of, than to any *clearness* in the imperfect intuition; for if I found—and surely this is the true test—the traces of design less conspicuous in the external world, confusion there as in the moral, and in both greater than is now found in either, I extremely doubt whether the faintest surmise of such a Being would have suggested itself to me."* But this "making light" of the argument from Design, is a proof, that in the Infidel point of view it has been found wanting by those who would have gladly availed themselves of it if it had been possible. The final resource of "intuition" for those unbelievers who are striving to hold fast their theism from the general wreck of their faith, is a tacit confession of the truth of the Christian position, that unaided human reason is incapable of maintaining religion. Professor Newman says:† "In saying the lungs *were intended* to breathe, and eyes to see, we imply an argument from Fitness to Design, which carries conviction to the overwhelming majority of cultivated as well as uncultivated minds. *Yet, in calling it an argument, we may seem to appeal to the logical faculty; and this would be an error.* . No syllogism is pretended, that *proves* a lung to have been made to breathe; but *we see it* by what some call Common Sense, and some Intuition."—Let this Common Sense, which wisely believes without logic, be yielded to, and it will establish more than a bare Theism.—"If any one," Mr. Newman adds presently, "*intelligently professes Atheism*, the more acute he is, the more distinctly we perceive that he is deficient in the Religious Faculty."‡—Acute intelligence, the Christian agrees,—it is his own argument,—without faith, which is the medium through which

* *Eclipse of Faith*, p. 125. † *The Soul*, 1st Ed. p. 32.
‡ *Ibid*, p. 33. [This is altered in the 3d Edition.]

The united force of thousands of intellects, some of them among the greatest that have made the past illustrious, has been steadily concentrated on problems, supposed to be of vital importance, and believed to be perfectly susceptible of solution, without the least result. All this meditation and discussion has not even established a few first principles. Centuries of labour have not produced any perceptible progress."*

XXVIII. When we speak of *Design* in creation, we are attempting to pronounce upon the *final cause* of things; which is truly beyond the sphere of human reason. The right method of Science is to inquire *how* things exist, not *why*. Without divine knowledge it is clearly impossible to comprehend Divine intention.——To say that we trace *design*, is equivalent to saying that we perceive the definite fulfilment of a plan previously marked out, an adaptation of one thing to another so perfect that it must have been satisfactory to the Divine idea of fitness. It is a word that belongs to the old conception of creation—"God said, let the earth bring forth grass: and it was so: and God saw that it was good"—; and that becomes quite inappropriate when all nature is regarded as in a state of perpetual evolution.† To say that the eye was designed to see, sounds an unobjectionable phrase to those who regard the eye as a certain definite organ; but it is a phrase that would not have occurred to the student of nature who had observed the progressive stages of improvement in the different kinds of eyes that exist in the animal kingdom, from those low orders where the senses first begin to act, up to our own, suggesting the probability that organs yet more perfect than any hitherto known are still in the process of formation. "Under the old theological influences, students are apt to fall into a state of anti-scientific admiration when they find the conditions and the fulfilment coincide,—when, having observed a function, anatomical analysis discloses a statical position in the organism which allows the fulfilment of the function. This irrational and barren admiration is hurtful to science, by habituating us to suppose that all organic acts are effected as perfectly as we can imagine, thus repressing the expansion of our biological speculations, and inducing us to admire complexities which are evidently injurious: and it is in direct opposition to religious aims, as it assigns human wisdom as the rule and even the limit of the divine, which, if such a parallel is to be established, must often appear to be the inferior of the two."‡——An anthropomorphic conception of Deity is necessary until the antagonistic correction of science is admitted. Human intelligence is the highest form in which the power of Deity manifests itself; man no longer blindly adapts himself to material needs, but self-consciously,—meditates, contrives, designs;—and proudly he believes himself the representative of Deity. As he can deal with matter alien to himself, so he conceives God acting outside of creation, planning, commanding, making laws. When he sees ends accomplished that seem to him fit and good, he hastily judges that this accomplishment

* *Biographical History of Philosophy*, by G. H. Lewes. Introduction, pp. 15, 17, 19-20. Knight's Weekly Volumes, No. XLV.

† See the recent work on the *Principles of Psychology*, by Herbert Spencer, 1855.

‡ Comte's *Positive Philosophy*, Vol. I. p. 395.

Divine aid is given to man, cannot save him from Atheism. Natural Theology studied in a Christian spirit, and with a Christian clue to its difficulties,* is clear and abundantly satisfactory to the legitimate demand of reason thus controlled; but it furnishes not even evidence of the *existence* of a Designing Creator, that will be accepted as sufficient by the bare logician who will yield up his scepticism to nothing short of positive demonstration, or the mere man of science for whom there are no facts but those obvious to the senses. It shows that there exists Power superior to our own, but not how that Power acts,(—not as *we* do, for man cannot *create*,—) nor where it resides: *we know* nothing of intelligence but in created, organized beings. The materialist can drag down the argument *ad absurdum*,(—not seeing that the real absurdity lies in employing reason where it is out of place,—) showing that analogy with human workmanship (—analogy between the Finite and the Infinite!—) would prove a Creator himself material and created. "Ergo," reasons Mr. Holyoake, "as we were formed by a being superior to us, so the Deity was formed by a being superior to him. The difficulty is only removed—we have only found a natural watchmaker, a plan-constructor, an animal-manufacturer, a star-former—we still want in the end what we wanted in the beginning—a God, an original agent, a sole Supreme, a Creator, a First Cause!"† Truly, as Mr. Newman says, we "*account for*" nothing in nature by attributing it to God; "a *God* uncaused and existing from eternity is to the full as incomprehensible as a *world* uncaused and existing from eternity."‡ Reason is baffled still, and can obtain no satisfaction. If we cannot submit to the incomprehensible, we cannot believe in God at all: and it is not likely that he who rejects the Gospel revelation of an Almighty Parent, because he cannot suffer his reason to be contradicted, will set it aside for the God whom he finds in nature. He who scorns the great Design of Christian Salvation, who has lost the promise of Immortality, and knows of no gracious Providence, will have an eye sharp to trace in nature, if design at all, much of design for evil as well as for good; if of purpose at all, much of purpose impotent and frustrated;—life designed to prey upon life, and all life designed to be the prey of death. He is likely to think it better to believe at once there is *no God;* and he will find arguments that will convince him.

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* See *antè*, Part II. O. XIII. and XV.

† *Paley's Natural Theology Refuted*, 5th Thousand, 1852. p. 33. The Rev. Stanley Faber is quoted p. 86, as saying: "The Deist, I allow, can prove that the universe was designed; but he never did, and he never can prove, *without the aid of revelation*, that the universe was designed by a *single* designer. . . Natural theology cannot inform us whether the world has one God, or millions of Gods."

‡ *Soul*, 1st ed. p. 36.

formed the limited object of God's desire, as it would have done of his own: the function which the organ performs so well must have been its final cause. But science teaches him reverently to take the simple facts as they appear; shows him that the function is the result, and not the originator of the organ, that the use of the organ depends on the structure of the organ, and that the habits of the animal are those which are consequent upon its organization. Things *are;* by Divine Law, Divine Will,—Will without caprice *is* Law: for human ideas extended to Deity lose their meaning. To speak —as it is indeed difficult to avoid speaking, when we confine our attention to any limited series of nature's operations,—of a Divine *Purpose*, must be only a figure of speech to us, because it extends utterly beyond our power of *knowledge;* but we do not the less recognize that the regularity of the movements of nature are an evidence of a steady and mighty tendency working in a certain direction. Science does not indeed recognize the God who moulds the plastic earth in his hands, or who once for all subjected it to immutable laws, and then deserted it; but it finds the God that works within, the great principle of Life and Growth, and therefore of Intelligence and Love.

The following is Comte's forcible and scornful rejection of the charge of atheism:* "Although I have long formally rejected all solidarity—dogmatic, no less than historic—between positivism and what is called atheism, I will here indicate a few summary points of view. Even considered under the purely intellectual aspect, atheism only constitutes a very imperfect emancipation, since it tends to prolong indefinitely the metaphysical stage by its ceaseless pursuit of new solutions of theological problems, instead of pushing aside all such problems as essentially *inaccessible.* The true positive spirit consists in always substituting the study of *laws* to that of *causes*—the *how* to the *why.* It is, therefore, incompatible with the ambitious dreams of a misty atheism relative to the formation of the universe, the origin of animals, &c. Positivism, in its appreciation of our diverse stages of speculation, does not hesitate to declare these doctoral chimeras very inferior—even in rationality—to the spontaneous beliefs of mankind. For the principle of all theology consisting in explaining phenomena by the intervention of a *will*, it can only be set aside by the recognition of the truth that *causes* are inaccessible, and by the study of the *laws.* So long as we persist in solving the problems of our infancy, it is idle to reject the *naïve* method which our young imagination applied to them, and which alone suit their nature. . . *Atheists may therefore be regarded as the most inconsequent of theologians*, since they attempt the same problems while rejecting the only suitable method."

Feuerbach, who always speaks of God in the sense of religion as *opposed* to science, describes thus the conception of him as a Being of the understanding:† "God, said the schoolmen, the Christian fathers, and long before them the heathen philosophers,—God is immaterial essence,

* In his *Discourse on the Ensemble of Positivism*, quoted and translated in *Leader*, April 17, 1852, p. 376. † *Essence of Christianity*, pp. 34-5.

XXIX. Modern Theism is but degenerate Christianity.

The work of Professor Newman on the "Soul"—written, as he tells us,* in the hopes of its proving a safeguard against "that desolating Pantheism which is abroad,"—may fairly be taken as the best representation of that state of mind which at the present day endeavours to reconcile devotional feeling with unbelief in Christianity: and by its singular candour, it may be said, it makes manifest the untenableness of its position. He explains that the Soul is "that side of human nature upon which we are in contact with the Infinite, and with God, the Infinite Personality";† this spiritual nature being distinct from the moral, but like it developed in a natural manner. When the soul, by means of its function of Reverence, which constitutes Religion, has elevated itself to the perception of Deity,—every other faculty being truly represented as incapable of it,—then first God may be supposed to hold communion with man; having, as it were, *waited passively* until human effort had attained this point. "Man must learn for himself," is the maxim of Infidelity, and Mr. Newman has adhered to it hitherto; but now in the end he can no longer resist the Christian conviction that has been pressing upon him, and he nullifies it by the tardy admission that *God must help him.* This is at once faith in the supernatural. The God who bends his ear to the suppliant, child-like appeal of trusting hearts, is no longer the formal Power who rules by general laws, but the Christian's God:—so restricted, however, so exclusively limited in his operations, as to be indeed but a miniature copy of the great original. Acknowledge man's need of God in the end, and his aid will soon be required at an earlier stage; nor is there any resting place of satisfaction to the consistent thinker till the whole doctrine of Revelation is recovered.

"'The Bible,' says Mr. Newman, 'is pervaded by a sentiment, which is implied everywhere, viz: *the intimate sympathy of the Pure and Perfect God with the heart of each faithful worshipper.* This is that which is wanting in Greek philosophers, English Deists, German Pantheists, and all formalists. This is that which so often edifies me in Christian writers and speakers when I ever so much disbelieve the letter of their sentences.'‡ It is" unaccountable "that the universal spiritual faculty should act thus capriciously, and equally" so "that Mr. Newman does not perceive, that if it were not for the Bible, his religion would no more have assumed the peculiar cast it has than that of Aristotle or Cicero. Sentiments due to the still active influences of his Christian education he imputes to the direct intuitions of spiritual vision, just as we are apt to confound the original and acquired perceptions of our eye-sight.—He is in the condition of one who mistakes a reflected image for the object itself, or a forgotten suggestion of another for an original idea. In the *camera obscura* of his mind, he flatters himself that the coloured forms there traced are the original inscriptions upon the walls, forgetful of the little aperture which has let in the light."§

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* *Soul,* Preface, p. xii. The passage is omitted in the 3d ed.

† *Ibid,* p. vii. ‡ *Phases,* p. 118. § *Eclipse of Faith,* pp. 145-6.

intelligence, spirit, pure understanding. Of God as God, no image can be made; but canst thou frame an image of mind? Has mind a form? Is not its activity the most inexplicable, the most incapable of representation? God is incomprehensible; but knowest thou the nature of the intelligence? Hast thou searched out the mysterious operation of thought, the hidden nature of self-consciousness? Is not self-consciousness the enigma of enigmas? Did not the old mystics, schoolmen, and fathers, long ago compare the incomprehensibility of the divine nature with that of the human intelligence, and thus, in truth, identify the nature of God with the nature of man? God as God—as a purely thinkable being, an object of the intellect,—is thus nothing else than the reason in its utmost intensification become objective to itself. It is asked what is the understanding or the reason? The answer is found in the idea of God. Everything must express itself, reveal itself, make itself objective, affirm itself. God is the reason expressing, affirming itself as the highest existence." "The various proofs of the existence of God are nothing else than various highly interesting forms in which the human nature affirms itself. Thus, *e.g.* the physico-theological proof (or proof from design) is the self-affirmation of the calculated activity of the understanding."* "The belief in the existence of God is the belief in a special existence, separate from the existence of man and Nature. A special existence is therefore only *then* a true and living one when special effects, immediate appearances of God, miracles, are believed in. Where, on the other hand, the belief in God is no longer a special faith, where the general being of the world takes possession of the whole man, there also vanishes the belief in special effects and appearances of God. Belief in God is wrecked, is stranded on the belief in the world, in natural effects as the only true ones. As here the belief in miracles is no longer any thing more than the belief in historical, past miracles, so the existence of God is also only an historical, in itself atheistic conception."†

XXIX. "The fundamental dogmas of Christianity are realized wishes of the heart;—the essence of Christianity is the essence of human feeling. Longing is the *necessity* of feeling; and feeling longs for a personal God.. To see God is the highest wish, the highest triumph of the heart. Christ is this wish, this triumph, fulfilled. God, as an object of thought only, *i.e.* God as God, is always a remote being; the relation to him is an abstract one. . However his works, the proofs of love which he gives us, may make his nature present to us, there always remains an unfilled void, —the heart is unsatisfied, we long to see him. . Christ is God known personally; Christ, therefore, is the blessed certainty that God is what the heart desires and needs him to be. God, as the object of prayer, is indeed already a human being, since he sympathizes with human misery, grants human wishes; but still he is not yet an object to the religious conscious-

* *Essence of Christianity*, p. 198, note. † *Ibid*, p. 202.

XXX. Infidelity naturally leads to universal Scepticism.

But the ordinary frame of mind of unbelievers is one in which the intellect is not likely to yield up any of the ground it has gained from the dominion of Faith. The rejection of Christianity was its first triumph; natural theology must fall before it as a second. The mind is in the same position with regard to the belief in the existence of God, as it was with regard to the belief of the truth of Christianity. In both cases, "man is placed amidst evidence abundantly sufficient to justify his reasonable faith, and yet beset with difficulties abundantly sufficient to baffle an indocile reason."* The evidences are plain and obvious; the difficulties are far-fetched and abstruse:—and so much the more does the intellect delight itself in setting them forth. "The argument" for the "eternal power and godhead" traceable in creation "depends on a principle which, whatever may be its metaphysical history or origin, is one which man perpetually recognizes, which every act of his own consciousness verifies, which he applies fearlessly to every phenomenon known or unknown;—viz: That every effect has a cause (though he knows nothing of their connexion), and that effects which bear marks of design have a designing cause.. This principle is so familiar, that if he were to affect to doubt it, in any practical case in human life, he would only be laughed at as a fool, or pitied as insane".. Yet there are "moods in which we can catch man,—perhaps after long meditation on the metaphysical grounds of human belief,—when he begins half to doubt, with unusual modesty, whether the child of dust is warranted to conclude *any thing* on a subject which loses itself in the infinite, and which so far transcends all his powers of apprehension.. Let him ponder for awhile on Self-subsistence, Eternity, Creation;†.. let him once humbly ponder such incomprehensible difficulties as these, and he will soon feel that though in the argument from design there seemed but one vast scene of triumph for his reason, there is as large a scene of exertion left for his faith." What man ought to do, is "not to let his ignorance control his knowledge, but to let his reason accept the proofs which justify his faith in accepting the difficulties. In no case is he, it appears, warranted to look for the certainty which shall exclude (whatever the triumphs of his reason) a gigantic exercise of his faith." "The boasted prerogative of Reason is that of a limited monarch; its attempts to make itself absolute can only end in its own dethronement, and after successive revolutions, in all the anarchy of absolute pyrrhonism."‡

XXXI. Or to positive Atheism.

With equal certainty does experience show that where the disposition of the mind is more self-confident, and less addicted to ratiocination, the natural course of Infidelity ends not short of Atheism.

"Educated men should not wait to be reminded that those who, after abandoning a peremptory historic belief, endeavour to retain Faith and

* Rogers's Essays, *Reason and Faith*, p. 278.

† Consider especially the bewildering results of the investigation into the nature of man's own mind. See pp. 257-260. ‡ *Ibid*, pp. 279, 282, 284, 255.

ness as a real man. Hence, only in Christ is the last wish of religion realized, the mystery of religious feeling solved:—solved however in the language of imagery proper to religion, for what God is in essence, that Christ is in actual appearance. So far the Christian religion may justly be called the absolute religion. That God, who in himself is nothing else than the nature of man, should also have a real existence as such, should be as man an object to the consciousness—this is the goal of religion. And this the Christian religion has attained in the incarnation of God, which is by no means a transitory act, for Christ remains man even after his ascension,—man in heart and man in form, only that his body is no longer an earthly one, liable to suffering."*

XXX. An habitual and universal scepticism is a morbid disposition of mind resulting from the abuse, and not the right use of reason, as every sincere man believes his own to be. It is the *reverse* of the mental condition induced by the study of science, which, not aiming at the impossible, acquires knowledge that is certain and satisfactory.

XXXI. Minds that are imaginative and emotional will never cease to idealize where they cannot know; and hence must spring religion, and perhaps religious forms, as long as human nature remains what it is. We think that reason, rightfully employed, will abolish the existing common notion of Deity, and all other definite notions as they continue to arise; because reason must ever be sensible that it is a comprehension beyond its reach. But it is the part of science ever to deepen our conviction of the necessity for a Cause of things, opening as it does to our admiration the wondrous working of the mighty Power, in which, however unknown and mysterious, we live and move and have our being: producing the sentiments of awe, of confidence, or worship and love, according to the disposition on which it acts. There are some minds, contented in the present and sensible, which will simply rejoice in being freed from what to them was the tyranny of religion, and may well be called Atheistic in the merely negative sense, that they know not, nor much feel the need of knowing God. The idealist, on the contrary, the Pantheist, conceives and therefore truly finds God everywhere. If philosophy keeps him from superstition, yet poetry will make him personify:† and perhaps when religion is consciously recognised as the *poetry* of man's noblest, finest nature, it will have its purest, its true influence.——This, however, must necessarily appear to be in fact a mere form of Atheism, when it is considered in contrast with the prevailing belief in a personal Deity. The charge of Atheism is, in fact, merely a relative one: there *can* be no absolute denial of what there is no absolute notion. One man does not believe

* *Essence of Christianity*, pp. 139, 145, 143-4.

† "What is Nature? Why do I not name thee God? Art thou not the Living Garment of God? O heavens, is it, in very deed, He, then, that ever speaks through thee; that lives and loves in thee, that lives and loves in me?" *Sartor Resartus*, p. 194.

Piety for their comfort, stand upon a slope that has no ledges: Atheism in its simplest form yawns to receive those who there stand; and they know themselves to be gravitating towards it. It would be far more reasonable for a man to die as a martyr for Atheism—a stage beyond which no further progress is possible, than to do so at any point short of that terminus, knowing as he does that every day is bringing him nearer to the gulf. The stronger the mind is, and the more it has of intellectual massiveness, the more rapid will be its descent upon this declivity. Minds of little density, and of much airy sentiment, may stay long where they are, just as gnats and flies walk to and fro upon the honied sides of a china vase; they do not go down, but never again will they fly."*

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XXXII.

We ought to believe, as we must act, on Probabilities.

It is the great mistake which shows ignorance of the nature of the subject, and also a wrong frame of mind in approaching it, to require *demonstration* of the truth of religion. "Demonstration we cannot have; for God has not granted demonstration on that or any other subject in which *duty* is involved.. If there had been any system which we could not *but* believe, which we *must* believe whether we would or not, no doubt the requisite evidence would have been such that scepticism would have been impossible.... the word *duty* is the key to the whole mystery, for it implies the possibility of resisting its claims. We do not speak of its being *incumbent* on a man to run out of a burning house, or to swim, if he can, when thrown into deep water. He cannot help it. If there be a Supreme Ruler of the universe, and if the posture of his intelligent creatures be that of submissive obedience to him, it is inconceivable that a man can ever have *experience* of his being willing to perform that duty with the sort of demonstration which" is demanded; "and for aught we know, it may be impossible, constituted as we are, that we should ever be actually trained to that duty except in the midst of very much less than certainty.. And the law of our religious condition is throughout in analogy with that of the entire condition of our present life; it is *probable* evidence only that is given to man in either case, and 'probable evidence,' as Bishop Butler says, 'often of even wretchedly insufficient character.' Nature, or rather God himself, everywhere cries aloud to us, 'Oh! mortals—certainty, demonstration, infallibility, are not for you, and shall not be given to you; for there must be a sphere for faith, hope, sincerity, diligence, patience.' And as if to prove to us not only that this evidence is what we must trust to, but that we safely may—He impels us by strong necessities of our lower nature operating on the higher (which would otherwise, perhaps, plead for the sceptic's inaction in relation

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* *The Restoration of Belief.* No. I. 1852. p. 94.

in another man's God; but there is always something which stands to himself in the place of God. It is only the presumption that some particular notions are *revealed*, that emboldens men to accuse one another of Atheism.

And, indeed, far more obnoxious to the charge of real Atheism than reason, is superstition; and of a kind truly pernicious and immoral. Compare the servile, mercenary, lying Atheism that hides itself under hypocrisy, with the spirit of the following:—

"Some who regard all profession of opinion as a mere matter of policy, and not of the understanding, will tell me that I can believe as I please, and call these Beings of theology what names I please. . but philosophical evidence and classification leave no choice in the matter. The existence of God is a problem to which the mathematics of human intelligence seems to me to furnish no solution. On the threshold of the theme we stagger under a weight of words. We tread amid a dark quagmire bestrewed with slippery terms. Now the clearest miss their way, now the cautious stumble, now the strongest fall. If there be a Deity to whom I am indebted, anxious for my gratitude or my service, I am as ready to render it as any one existent, so soon as I can comprehend the nature of my duty. I, therefore, protest against being considered, as Christians commonly consider the unbeliever, as one who hates God, or is without a reverential spirit. Hatred implies knowledge of the objectionable thing, and cannot exist where nothing is understood. I am not unwilling to believe in God, but I am unwilling to use language for which I have no adequate idea present to my own understanding. Deem me not blind to the magnificence of nature or the beauties of art, because I interpret their language differently from others. I thrill in the presence of the dawn of day, and exult in the glories of the setting sun. . It is not in a low, but in an exalted estimate of nature that my rejection of the popular theology arises. The wondrous manifestations of nature indispose me to degrade it to a secondary rank. I am driven to the conclusion that the great aggregate of matter which we call Nature is eternal, because we are unable to conceive a state of things when nothing was. . . I cannot rank myself with the Theists, because I can conceive of nothing beyond nature distinct from it, and above it. The language invented by Pope, expressing that 'we look through Nature *up* to Nature's God,' has no significance for me, as I know nothing besides Nature, and can conceive of nothing greater. The majesty of the Universe so transcends my faculties of penetration, that I pause in awe and silence before it. It seems not to belong to man to comprehend its attributes and extent, and to affirm what lies beyond it. . This is the inability, rather than any design of my own, which resolves me as one of that class of speculationists designated, in the technicality of theology, Atheists."*

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* *The Logic of Death*, by G. J. Holyoake, sixteenth thousand. 1851. pp. 9—10.

to this as well as to another world,) to play our part; if we stand shivering on the brink of action, necessity plunges us headlong in; if we fear to hoist the sail, the strength of the current of life snaps our moorings, and compels us to drive.. Faith in that same sort of evidence which the sceptic rejects when urged in behalf of religion, prompts the farmer to cast in his seed, though he can command no blink of sunshine, nor a drop of rain; the merchant to commit his treasures to the deep, though they may all go to the bottom, and sometimes do; the physician to essay the cure of his patient, though often half in doubt whether his remedy will kill or save... God says to us in effect, 'On such evidence you *must* and *shall act*,' and shows us that we safely may. Without promising us absolute success in all our plans, or absolute truth in the investigation of evidence, he says, in either case, 'Do your best; be faithful to the light you have, diligent and conscientious in your investigations of available evidence, great or little—act fearlessly on what appears the truth, and leave the rest to me.'"* "Since men in *general*, (whether from the possession of a distinct religious faculty, though it may be corrupt and depraved, or a mere rudimentary tendency to religion,) have adopted *some* religion, religious scepticism, in an intelligible sense, is opposed to *nature*;.. it is opposed to *nature* again in this way, that whereas restlessness and agitation of mind are usually, at all events, warnings to seek relief, scepticism produces these as its pure and proper result;.. since by the confession of every mind worthy of respect, the great doctrines of religion, if *not* true, are such that we cannot but *wish* they were; since scepticism has nothing to allure in it, and rather causes misery than happiness; and since men *in general* easily believe as they *wish*, it is an unaccountable paradox, than any one should remain a sceptic for a day, except indeed, from a guilty fear of the truth;.. since scepticism tends to misery, it is better *not* to know its truth, and therefore ignorance is better than knowledge;—if Christianity be an illusion, it, at all events, tends to make men happier than the *truth* of scepticism, and therefore error is better than truth."† "Supposing the sceptical view of the gloom in which we are placed is the true one, and that the Christian's is false; which, nevertheless, is likely to be not merely the happier, but the nobler being,—he who sits down in querulous repining or slothful inactivity, as the result of doubt; or he who, buoyant with faith and hope, encounters the gloom, and, while longing for the dawn, is confident that it will come?" "On the side of feeling also" appeal must be made: "feeling is not argument; but neither is man *all* reason.. Man, indeed, is not called upon to do anything for

* *Eclipse of Faith*, pp. 439-442.

† *Ibid*, pp. 436-7. [The form of the sentence altered: the author is exhibiting the paradoxes of scepticism.] The argument is that of Pascal in his Dialogue, *Pensées*, Part II. Article III., showing, "That it is difficult to demonstrate the existence of God by natural reason, but that it is most safe to believe it."

XXXII. The whole argument of "believing upon probabilities" is based on a profound scepticism as to the power and value of Truth. It is an irreligious want of faith in the Divine constitution of the actual world. Instead of considering the state of mind that, "if the Christian doctrines were *not true*, would *wish they were*", as "worthy of respect", it seems to us possessed of the most childish folly and presumption : and as for the assertion that men are "nobler," or even "happier," for believing their own chimeras to be true,—we believe of the first that it is entirely false, of the latter, that it may be supposed only in so far as children may be thought happier than men, animals than children.

To say that God gives us defective evidence on purpose to make our belief an act of meritorious faith,—besides that it is begging the whole question,—is in fact not analogous to, but opposed to the whole analogy of the instruction we gain from nature. The calamities that attend our acting upon uncertain knowledge, lead us, not to *trust* more, but to be more cautious, more careful to gain that accurate knowledge upon which we may act securely. The method of nature does not seem to be to give us faith and hope and courage as a *reward* for acting rashly, but rather to give us these as a means of helping us to conquer the difficulties in the sphere of uncertainty which will always remain to us in some measure, but which she impels and encourages us to diminish and gain over, by the advantages that immensely accrue to us from every fresh acquisition of the knowledge of facts. Nature certainly offers no premiums to contented ignorance. She never tells us that it is *safer* to make sure beforehand of a good harvest, and that a hazardous medicine will cure and not kill ; but rather that it is wiser to provide against the risk of failure, and in unknown diseases rather to leave nature alone than perhaps officiously to counteract her. But in *desperate* cases we must act without knowledge :—and this is the case supposed to be analogous with the believing in supernatural religion ! We are supposed to be desperately driven to believe because if we do not God will damn us to everlasting fire ! It is to save ourselves from hell that we must—not *believe*, for nature has made it *impossible* for us to believe without sufficient evidence, but—try to blind ourselves to the deficiency of evidence, to seal up our minds with prejudice lest we should not be able to help seeing the other side of the question ; that we must *pretend* to be-believe, or try to deceive ourselves into thinking that we do believe :—for attainment of which religious (!) frame of mind the unnatural austerities of monkish asceticism have been found to be the only appropriate preparation. A Pascal endeavouring to cancel his keen intelligence by mortifying himself into humiliating submission to the monstrous demands of an unreasonable creed, is a piteous spectacle that should serve as a warning to the end of time.

Truly, it is "the necessities of the lower nature operating on the higher" which, as they make men selfishly rash in worldly affairs, so also induce them to sacrifice the proper, really beneficial use of the present life,

which his reason does not tell him that he has sufficient evidence; but a part of that very evidence is often the dictate of feeling; and *genuine* reason will listen to the heart, as not *always*, nor perhaps more frequently than otherwise, a suspicious pleader. If, as Pascal says so truly, it sometimes has its reasons which the reason cannot comprehend, it has also its reasons which the reason thoroughly understands." The bereaved mourner who seeks to know "whether the '*vale, vale, in æternum vale*, is really the proper utterance of a breaking heart as it closes the sepulchre on the object of its love," will confess that "the FABULOUS of the Christian is better than the Infidel's TRUE."*

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XXXIII.

Without belief in God, man sinks towards a level with the condition of brutes.

Thus, then, stripped of the religious wealth that has been treasured up for ages, without solid ground for belief in God or in his own immortality, what is left to the Infidel? Nothing but the bare Actual: that which is manifest to his own senses and consciousness, and a little dim history of the past, derived from the scarcely-to-be-trusted experience of fellow-men; a blind, tremendous Power of unfeeling Nature,—dead, material Nature without a Soul; and his own proud independence of thought—perhaps already snapped at the root, its fibres strained with the tension of the effort to pull down God from his throne in heaven, and relapsing into imbecile despair. To the earth he belongs, and to the earth he is hastening to return, like all other forms of brute, of vegetable existence, that grow only to decay.—"The worm is my sister!"—"one thing befalleth the man and the beast."—And if he recoil shudderingly from this thought, the possible alternative to him in his present condition is only worse, since there is now on the other side, where peace and joy unspeakable *might* have been, only a "fearful looking-for of judgment." On the nature and extent of that punishment, no fellow-mortal should dare pronounce; but certainly the Scriptures have set the seal of condemnation on that unbelief which is persistent in rejection of the offered word of God. If Christianity after all be true, the awful future, to the announcement of which he has turned a deaf ear, will come upon him in all its dread reality; *his* soul will be amongst the lost, who have willingly done despite unto the spirit of Grace, and cast away the sole means of salvation which the wisdom of Omnipotence has ordained.

Regarding, however, his state merely in a temporal point of view, it is one which a philosopher with a large heart must find it hard to commend. Reason, cold, self-reliant reason, is elevated into the God of humanity;

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* *Eclipse of Faith*, pp. 444, 446, 70, 447.

for the sake of propitiating that favour which they hope will repay them with immortal interest: forgetting that while, as they think, they are *saving* themselves from the wrath to come, they are *not safe* from the evil consequences that inevitably attend the perversion of nature, and the disregard of truth.

Of that more venial kind of unreasoning faith which springs from excess of feeling, that can fill up the measure of the faintest probability to certainty out of the vehemence of its own desires, or from the sorrow whose importunate cries for relief find an echo in every human breast;—it can only be said, that the weakness of our nature must not control its strength.

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XXXIII. Whoever has been honestly carrying out his pursuit of truth, cannot be in a worse position on that account: to think otherwise appears to us the highest impiety. Whatever good can be supposed in store for mankind in general, cannot be so forfeited by him. As he knows that the Divine Reality of things remains immutably the same, whatever be his puny perception of it,—that God is what He is, whether we believe in Him or not,—so also he has the stable confidence, founded upon the tendency observable in nature to associate the highest good with the exercise of the highest faculties, that he himself will never be really the worse off for mere mistake. He has *faith*, that by truth and honesty he can lose *nothing*. If there is more truth in Christianity than he is at present able to discover, still it must be for him also in the end. But if his convictions are well founded, he has lost only what is delusive; and he has the present gain, that the real becomes of greater value to him.

The Infidel towards Christianity is a Believer in Nature, in a sense that seems to make it a new revelation to him. It has become to him more magnificent and more dear, since he no longer regards it as what he is bound to despise or slightly esteem, as what he ought to endeavour to separate himself from and rise superior to. Now that he feels himself to belong to it solely and entirely, it has for him a profounder influence, soothing while unflattering, and by its silent majesty rebuking the littleness of his former conceit. He recognizes it as his proper glory to be a part of the grand homogeneous Whole. He has a new-born reverence for the meanest of its creatures, and is not ashamed to own himself akin with the worm that crawls at his feet, with the green blade of grass. Highest as he stands among the present inhabitants of this planet, he rejoices to believe that new forms of life may yet appear as superior to himself as he is to the lowest of these.

The Infidel *has* Nature. He takes up his possession of all her rich variety and glorious abundance, teeming with promise for the future. He cultivates science with a new ardour, so that it becomes to him a religion.

to satisfy which all the warm, trusting impulses of the heart, are relentlessly sacrificed. The feelings are chained down to earthly objects. There is no Father of Spirits to trust, no Infinite Goodness to adore; "man is the only object for the affections of man." Nor let his spiritual aspirations ascend to heaven: there is *no* Heaven for the unbeliever: let him clip the wings of his soul, that it may wander to and fro on the earth. *Here* is the home and the grave of man. Why need he cultivate the lofty faculties of his nature?—they have no immortal sphere. A few short years and they are extinguished for ever! If the force of genius compels him to creations that will be immortal—immortal by a poor figure of speech!—for his descendants, yet he himself will have no joy therein, mouldering in the unconscious grave. Surely, under this blighting influence, the nature of man must grovel more and more, and become more of the earthly nature of that low world to which he clings.*

Is it thus that the *race* can progress, deprived of those incitements which have shown their power hitherto in drawing man out of barbarism into generous civilization, throughout the whole course of his history? The history of Religion has run constantly parallel with that of civilization. The belief in God has become purer and more intense in exact proportion with increasing general enlightenment. And yet, when that enlightenment is most congratulating itself on the height of its attainments, it seeks to throw aside the companion of its progress, the Religion that has been the sustainer and life-blood of its development! And thus we come again to the true source of this attempt to abolish Deity, the old rebellion of man's Pride against God's Authority. Man, thinking himself near to angel, feels

* Dr. Arnold says: "The real proof is the practical one; that is, let a man live on the hypothesis of its falsehood, the practical result will be bad; that is, a man's besetting and constitutional faults will not be checked; and some of his noblest feelings will be unexercised, so that if he be right in his opinions, truth and goodness are at variance with one another, and falsehood is more favourable to our moral perfection than truth; which seems the most monstrous conclusion, which the human mind can possibly arrive at.. If I were talking with an Atheist, I should lay a great deal of stress on *faith* as a necessary condition of our nature, and as a gift of God to be earnestly sought for in the way which God has appointed, that is, by striving to *do his will*. For faith does no violence to the understanding; but the intellectual difficulties being balanced, and it being necessary to act on the one side or the other, faith determines a man to embrace that side which leads to moral and practical perfection; and unbelief leads him to embrace the opposite, or what I may call the Devil's religion, which is, after all, quite as much beset with intellectual difficulties as God's religion is, and morally is nothing but one mass of difficulties and monstrosities." "I wish to make the main point not the truth of Christianity per se, as a theorem to be proved, but the wisdom of our abiding in it, and whether there is any thing else for it but the life of beast or of devil." *Life of Arnold*, Vol. I. pp. 312, 306.

And he has a noble inheritance of stored-up thought; and, better still, the possession of the same powers of mind which have originated all those religions, philosophies, poetries, which have exalted man so high as to make him think himself too divine for earth.—In the little world of our own mind, each one of us images the experience of mankind. We have our era of fetish worship, our overwhelming sense of physical power; our admiring perception of order and law, of mechanically-controlling intelligence; the formation of each era being submerged in turn by new tides of thought. At length the sublime consciousness of the dominion of mind over matter rises as a distinct revelation, a Christ walking over the waves:—mind that is not intelligence alone, but with it moral greatness, and the all-harmonizing power of love. All these successive revelations dawn within the individual mind, and each mind possesses, or may possess, the good out of all. Christianity is ours, as well as all that have gone before it. We have the mental need that gave rise to them, the mental capacity akin to that which created, and which realized them. Our appreciation of them is a treasure in possession for ever. When religious conceptions, as they have been hitherto unconscious growths, come to be conscious creations, perhaps they will prove to give a finer satisfaction to the mind: as the works of Shakspeare delight us more as fictions of human genius, than they would if they appeared to us, as they might be supposed to do to rude uncultivated readers, the simple relations of actual facts. We have in this the worship of Genius. But yet more worthy of our homage is the Practical Goodness, which by its heroic conquests over evil, seems Genius in Action; and the noble enthusiasm of Love, the Genius of the Heart, which annihilates self in generous devotion to others' good. In all these we have "Incarnations of Deity," to worship and to imitate; for we also have the elements of the godlike within us.

The Infidel has freedom from Superstition. His mind is relieved from the intolerable burden of supposed obligation to believe what it cannot believe, and is free to develop itself healthily according to the Divine energy within it; in the way of right reason, scientific truthfulness, natural human affection. He has no double, contradictory notions about earthly desires and heavenly inspirations; no necessity for subjugation of the natural constitution as being at enmity with God; no puzzling doubt as to the probability of Providential interference, but a clear perception that he must work and help himself. He has an intelligible sphere of action, an intelligible rule of duty. "The work that his hand findeth to do" in this present world, he can "do it with his might", not fearing that he will suffer for it in another.

He has the Divine impulse to grow, to aspire; there is no fear that Nature should make a retrograde movement, and that man should fall in love with the condition of brutes, and seek to assimilate himself with them.

the demoniacal temptation to be as God; and like the insurgent Satan he must fall, unless the Divine grace of Humility arrest his headlong course.

Most commonly, in the gracious dealing of God with his rebellious children, this humility comes with affliction. God sends sorrow, and the stern heart is melted. It feels it cannot do without Him. And when once the blessed act of Submission is accomplished, the love of God pours into the opened soul, and gives it the promise of all things. But it is God who works in us both to will and to do of His own good pleasure; and it is the will of God that man should first feel his need and seek His aid. Mere human argument is most vain to convince the Infidel, serving only as an occasion for the dexterous exercise of those reasoning powers on whose all-sufficiency he relies so confidently, so presumptuously. It may, however, be made the means of helping those who are wavering, and not yet hardened against the instincts of Faith, which are the teachings of God:—and who is there that would not desire to urge every fellow-being to take earnest, prayerful heed, before he commit himself to the suicidal negation of belief, which condemns him to rank himself with the beasts that perish, to live "without God and without hope in the world"!

These very visions of heaven and immortal Gods, show that he will ever, in his desires at least, be aiming rather at a sphere above him :—by these desires being ever also drawn upwards in actual fact.

But it is thought that the recognition of these bright visions as his own creations, will henceforth check his aspirations, and degrade them into self-glorification.—It would be but a short-lived folly : there is nothing vainer than too high an opinion of self. All power of mind that is not employed to good purposes, soon becomes a wreck, and leaves no honour behind.

Nature will not suffer man to be proud. She makes him feel, and warns him to bear in mind, that a mighty Power rules his destiny which he is all unable to resist. To bring his will into harmony with that Power, is the wisdom, the religion, she is ever instilling into him. She gave to him as the first lesson of that religion, that the worship he must render to the God of nature is to *work*, as He works, not for the good of one, but of all ; and she has for him also the second lesson, that he should *submit*, with unrepining acquiescence, to the pain and loss which that Divine working—through which he has enjoyed so much, and whose ultimate ends he believes so beneficent,—may bring upon himself, even when they seem to conduce only to the general and not to his personal good. The article of Mahomedan faith is also that of Nature, "God is God, and man is *Islam*," that which surrenders itself, which trusts :—only, the trust that she inspires is not servile, but manly.——And for the assurance that this religion of Nature is sufficient as regards the *happiness* of man, we have just ground, in the very recognition that it does indeed effectually promote the true unfolding of his whole being, in which happiness consists. Whatever thwarts this, *must* lead to misery ; whatever fulfils it, must be in the end the means of securing the only real Good.

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